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## [ PLACECHECK REPORT ]

Salehurst and Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Development Plan  
June 2016

Approved S&R NPSG 14/6/16

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## 1.0 Introduction

The parish of Salehurst and Robertsbridge is currently in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. A Steering Group has been assembled to lead on its preparation, which consists of members of the Parish Council and interested local residents. As part of the process, the Steering Group has identified and compiled relevant information that will be documented to form the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan. The Placecheck will provide an important part of this evidence.

### 1.1 What is a Placecheck?

A Placecheck is a widely used tool designed to provide local residents with the opportunity to study a place they know well, and to think about how to improve it. Participants question aspects of their locality to identify what it is about an area that they like, dislike and think could be improved.

### 1.2 Who undertakes a Placecheck?

Whilst it is possible for an outside organisation to identify and define general features of each area, it is preferable that those people who live and work there to undertake this exercise. The resulting intimate knowledge allows local residents to make the most effective contribution to decisions about the future of the area under review.

### 1.3 The Placecheck Walkabout

A key feature of Placecheck is that of the walkabout. Members of the Steering Group were allocated an area within the village in which to undertake their walkabout, typically in pairs. Members were provided with a set of questions to which they had to provide a considered answer. These were provided in a standard format that also contains prompts to aid the thought process. A copy of the proforma is contained in Appendix 1.

The questions cover four topics:

- A special place
- A well-connected, accessible and welcoming place
- A safe and pleasant place
- A planet-friendly place

Essentially, the exercise covers three basic questions which members were asked to consider whilst undertaking the walkabout:

- What do we like about this place?
- What do we dislike about it?
- What do we need to work on?

The forms were completed by the Steering Group members, after which all of the responses were compiled and analysed. The results are presented as part of this document.

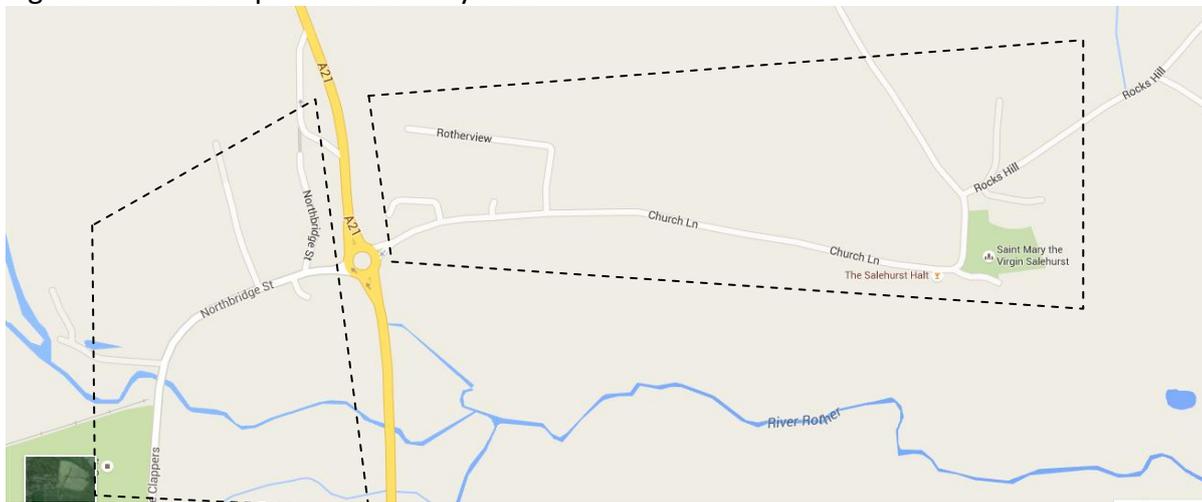
## 1.4 Areas assessed

The village was divided up into a number of areas:

- 3.1 High Street
- 3.2 Station Road
- 3.3 Willowbank
- 3.4 Brightling Road
- 3.5 Heathfield Gardens
- 3.6 Bishops Lane
- 3.7 George Hill
- 3.8 Fair Lane & Fayre Meadow
- 3.9 Northbridge Street
- 3.10 Salehurst & Rotherview
- 3.11 Mill Rise
- 3.12 Langham Road
- 3.13 Bellhurst Road
- 3.14 Glenleigh Walk
- 3.15 Outer Areas
- 3.16 Open Spaces

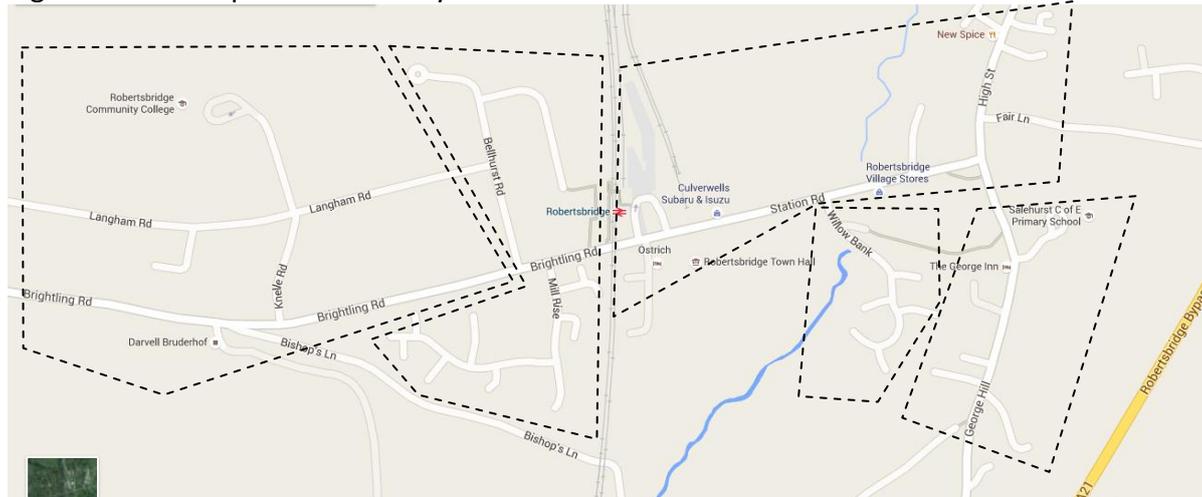
Three maps identifying the individual areas are contained in figures 1, 2 and three, below:

Figure 1: Northern part of the study area



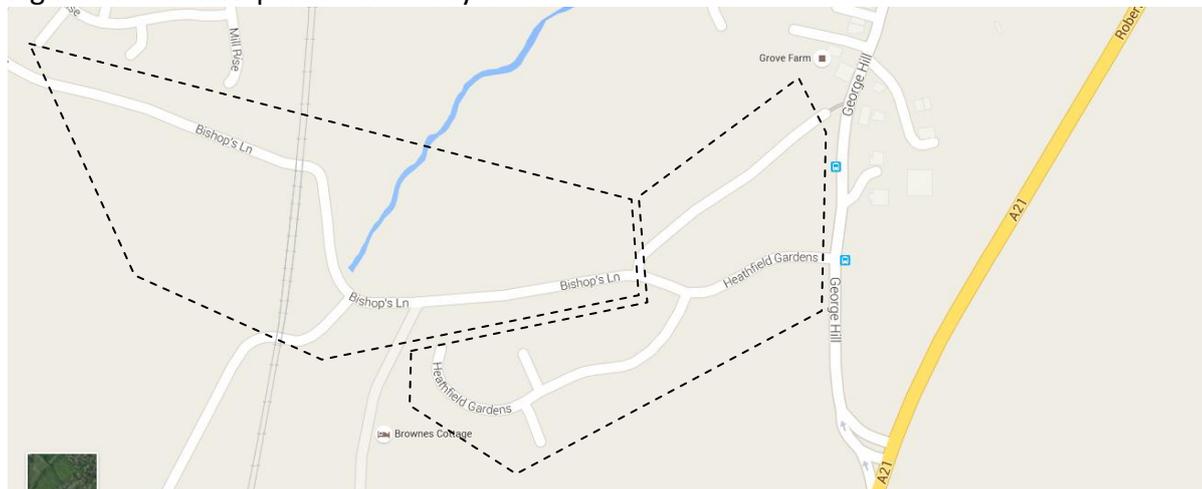
Source: Google maps

Figure 2: Central part of the study area



Source: Google maps

Figure 3: Southern part of the study area



Source: Google maps

## 1.5 Structure of the Results

The results of the walkabouts have been divided up into two sections, the village and the various areas. Each of the answers for the various areas has been divided up into the three topics based on the general questions asked of the participants:

- What do we like about this place?
- What do we dislike about it?
- What do we need to work on?

Please note that all responses have been presented as given by their authors, to reflect their individual thoughts and opinions, but edited and organised to fit the recommended report format.

## 2.0 Robertsbridge and Salehurst

The Parish consists of two main population centres, Robertsbridge and Salehurst. Salehurst is the historic centre, where the parish church is located, but is now only a hamlet with a small population. Robertsbridge developed about half a mile away on the main London Road and is now the main population centre, with a mainline railway station. Northbridge Street lies between the two. Outlying areas and open spaces are also considered.

### 2.1 Robertsbridge

#### 2.1.1 *What makes the village special or unique?*

1. A mix of old and new, with unique historical features
2. The rural setting that gives it a distinctive open feel
3. Numerous period timber framed buildings survive in the centre of the village
4. Variety of local amenities: Two general shops (one independent), bakery, chemist, three pubs, village hall, chapels, mainline railway station & heritage railway, bus service, cricket bat factory, country store/agricultural supplier, restaurant, doctors and vets surgeries, car park and toilets, recreation ground, cricket pitch, village hall and secondary, primary and nursery schools.
5. The 'Clappers' bridges, the river Rother and floodplain it crosses are an important feature, giving it its name and historically separating Northbridge Street from Robertsbridge.
6. Fair Lane adds to the mediaeval character of the village with its mix of period properties, including, probably, the oldest surviving building in Robertsbridge.
7. The mill building by the river Rother is a prominent feature, a mill existing on this site for over 800 years.
8. Robertsbridge had strong links with the timber industry having had a huge timber yard, and still has a working cricket bat factory



Attractive and characterful properties within the village

## A *Why does the village look the way it does?*

1. Starting in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Robertsbridge developed down the High Street in stages, with freestanding buildings in large plots and later infilling and subdivision as the population increased
2. In common with most comparable villages, the number of shops and small businesses reduced drastically during the last few years of the last century, leaving the village with a largely residential character
3. There is a mix of historical styles in the centre with few inappropriate intrusions
4. There is a variety of peripheral developments, private and local authority, resulting in a mix of large, small, and detached properties, both rented and owner occupied
5. Although still a thriving community with pubs, schools and shops, there has been a reduction in other employment opportunities, for example, the closure of the mill and wood yard
6. A real sense of community spirit exists, demonstrated by the many active community groups, participation in Parish Council business and other local committees
7. There is a strong commitment to preserving the character of the village among local residents.

### 2.1.3 *Why do we like the village?*

1. It is quiet, spacious and reasonably well-maintained
2. History can be seen everywhere
3. Open feel with views of AONB all round
4. People are very friendly and approachable
5. There are attractive walks along the river where wildlife abounds.
6. The village is busy all day, with retired residents as well as school and business activity
7. There are residential areas in close proximity to large open spaces
8. Public transport is accessible, with a mainline rail station and a regular bus service
9. Whilst taxi services are limited, a voluntary car service and a community bus exist
10. Robertsbridge is surrounded by farmland, flood plain and woodland
11. Attractive buildings with a mix of timber framing, weatherboarding and local tile
12. The village layout is fairly straightforward and there is a public map in the centre
13. Flood defences have been constructed since the flood of 2000, which have so far been effective in protecting properties within them



An example of a timber framed building



Fair Lane, part of the Conservation Area

#### 2.1.4 *What potential is there to enhance the place?*

1. Appropriate street lighting in selected areas, lower speed limits, pavement improvements in certain parts, fewer cars parking on the streets, better street signage.
2. Improvements to pedestrian safety, road layouts and footpaths should be considered, in particular in the High Street and Station Road
3. Parking by commuters on streets around the station is a cause of considerable inconvenience to local residents, partly because of the reluctance of commuters to pay the high parking charges at the station car park. If more public parking were available it might make the village more accessible. Parking regulations are not currently regularly enforced
4. The threat of flooding is an ongoing concern. The recreation ground and fields in the flood plain that are outside the flood defences are regularly flooded, rendering them unusable. Further flood alleviation measure must be considered in view of climate change
5. Electric car charging points or provision for car share service might be considered
6. Appearance of some buildings in key locations needs improving, particularly in the centre of the village
7. There may be scope for more use of solar or alternative energy sources
8. Some footpaths might be better marked and maintained
9. A network of cycle lanes or all weather paths could be developed centred on the village
10. The need for an all-weather sports court has been identified
11. Maintenance of roads (potholes, blocked drains) is inadequate at present
12. White picket gates are planned for the entry points to village but not yet installed
13. Better connection between areas is needed, with existing bridges maintained and possibly new ones
14. The guides and scouts have dedicated buildings, both requiring upgrading in the future.
15. The Parish Council could control the central car park in the future. A residents parking scheme is one option to be considered to address the issue of on-street commuter car parking
16. Improve overall maintenance and appearance of the roads and pavements

## 2.2 **Salehurst**

#### 2.2.1 *What makes the village special or unique?*

1. Salehurst is separated from the main village of Robertsbridge by the A21 and has a much smaller population than Robertsbridge itself.
2. Salehurst was the original settlement and is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. It contains the Parish Church, St Mary the Virgin and the Salehurst Halt pub, with the ruins of Robertsbridge Abbey nearby.

#### 2.2.2 *Why does it look the way it does?*

1. There has been little development in Salehurst since the 1960s. The Development Boundary only extends around 200 yards along the north side of Church Lane. Building is restricted because of the proximity of the flood plain from south of Church Lane to the River Rother and beyond.

2. The building of the A21 in 1989 has provided a significant physical barrier from Robertsbridge, and this has ensured that Salehurst has its own identity, whilst remaining very much a part of the whole village.

### 2.2.3 *Why do we like this place?*

1. It is beautiful, small and friendly and mostly unspoilt
2. It retains many historically important features
3. The Parish Church is a significant community asset used by many local people
4. The Salehurst Halt pub is operated by local families and is very successful



Part of the historic character of Salehurst

### 2.2.4 *What potential is there to enhance the place?*

1. The 30 mph speed limit could be extended to beyond the church
2. There is the potential for some street lighting in Salehurst, although lighting the length of Church Lane is not considered necessary because of its rural location
3. Church Lane is regularly used by pedestrians, but is hazardous as it has no pavements or speed limit
4. Period village signs could be installed

## 3.0 Individual Area Assessments

### 3.1 High Street

This area forms the heart of the settlement of Robertsbridge, where most of the shops, pubs and other businesses are located. It benefits from the by-pass (opened in 1992), with mainly local traffic passing through. There is a mix of historic buildings, mostly in good condition, with few unpleasant intrusions in the High Street itself. Most of central Robertsbridge is included in the conservation area.

#### 3.1.1 What do we like about this place?

1. The village has a coherent centre with a mixture of period buildings that has not changed fundamentally for at least a century
2. It features several late medieval timber framed Wealden hall houses, as well as attractive period brick, weatherboard and tile cottages
3. Few out of character buildings intrude in to the High Street
4. The overall visual quality is further enhanced by brick pavements and some period street lighting
5. The widespread survival of the original local tile roofs results in a pleasing overall roofscape when viewed from afar
6. Limited on-street car parking is available, as expected in a conservation area, but a central car park with about 30 spaces is available in Station Road
7. The primary school and pre-school have sufficient capacity and a high standard of provision
8. There are two remaining pubs (one currently closed), general store, hairdresser, vet, chemist, two florists and restaurant along the High Street



Attractive Street-scene with many historic properties

### 3.1.2 What do we dislike about it?

1. Pedestrian accessibility and safety are compromised within the village centre by some unfriendly features such as narrow or non-existent pavements
2. Similarly, cycling within the village centre is not totally safe as it is dominated by motor vehicles
3. A particular danger point for pedestrians is by the (smaller) flower shop where the High Street narrows. A pedestrian crossing existed here in the past (pre bypass)
4. Numerous school buses have to pass through to the secondary school (Robertsbridge Community College) twice a day, which causes severe congestion for a short period. There are a number of businesses using large delivery vehicles on a daily basis
5. There are some vacant properties in the High Street causing concern at the time of writing, principally the Seven Stars public house, owned by Harvey's of Lewes, is closed at present. It is an important community asset, architecturally outstanding and must be preserved as an active part of the village.
6. NatWest bank has closed its small branch, and a decision is outstanding on an appeal made against refusal to allow a change of use to residential; the period terrace in which it is situated is in poor decorative condition.
7. The United Reformed Church has been sold and there is a current planning application to convert it to three flats
8. The electricity substation is located at the centre of the village, but is outside the flood defences, so liable to flooding. It is also most unattractive and could be screened with local native willow trees.



Pedestrian accessibility is compromised



Cars dominating the street-scene

### 3.1.3 *What do we need to work on?*

1. Replace the visually inappropriate road surface in the High Street for something more appropriate for a conservation area
2. More extensive use of period street lighting would be desirable if agreed by residents
3. Improve pedestrian safety by making improvements to the pavement at selected points, where natural pinch points already exist, for example at the lower end of the High Street.
4. A speed limit of 20 mph throughout the central area would be desirable
5. No overall reduction in parking in the High Street is necessary, since parked cars generally act as traffic calming as well as encouraging use of local shops
6. Extra parking may be possible in selected areas where the road width allows and vehicle passing would not be obstructed
7. The redundant loading bay, created when the old post office was still open, needs to be removed and a new one created for the One Stop shop, as unloading lorries frequently block the road and damage the pavements
8. The BT telephone box at the junction with Station Road is unattractive and could be removed, or replaced with a period telephone box
9. Road markings need repainting at the junction with High Street
10. Yellow lines are needed in the top part of Station Road, to prevent obstruction of traffic at the High Street junction
11. Hand rails on High Pavement should be re-designed in keeping with period look
12. Maintenance of the public realm in general, including the brick paving, to a suitable standard for the Conservation Area

## 3.2 **Station Road**

Station Road connects the High Street with Brightling Road, terminating at a level crossing by the mainline rail station. In the middle is a hump-backed bridge over the Darwell Stream, which forms part of the flood defences. The central public car park and Robertsbridge Club are in the eastern section. In the western section, there is open space and Village Hall on one side, the Gray-Nicolls cricket bat factory and Culverwells agricultural/country store and vehicle dealership.

### 3.2.1 *What do we like about this place?*

1. Jubilee Gardens and Pipers Field are valuable public spaces in the centre of the village
2. The open floodplain enhances the rural feel
3. The extensive floodplain means that there is permanent open space through the centre of the settlement, dividing it up into clearly defined residential areas, and preventing over-development
4. Very minimal flood defences were extensively improved after serious flooding in 2000, which has had a great effect on the appearance and functioning of the village
5. The businesses here provide local employment without intruding into the semi-rural scene
6. Short-term on-street parking is available in this street
7. Properties on the north side are liable to flooding by run-off if drains are not cleared

### 3.2.2 *What do we dislike about it?*

1. Station Road is lacking proper pavements between the junction with the High Street and the hump-backed bridge, which poses significant danger to pedestrians.
2. The proximity of the hump back single lane bridge over the Darwell stream, to the Village Stores, and its priority direction causes congestion when shop customers park on the bridge approach
3. The road surface of the western section is currently in very poor condition, and drainage could be improved
4. Access to the northern side is compromised by the lack of a pedestrian pavement
5. Level crossing creates delays which may be unavoidable
6. On-street parking around the station by non-resident commuters is a common complaint. The station car park is large enough, but charges are high, but the Parish has little control over this as it is franchised out by Network Rail.



The station with the associated parking

### 3.2.3 *What do we need to work on?*

1. Consider solutions to on-street parking by commuters
2. Better road maintenance and improvements to drainage
3. Consider solutions to provide customer parking outside Village Stores and bridge priority
4. Brick pavements and more attractive boundary fencing to public areas

## 3.3 Willowbank

Built in the 1990's, this is a self-contained development of detached, semi-detached and attached bungalows, with buildings arranged in no through roads and off-street parking areas.

### 3.3.1 *What do we like about this place?*

1. Pedestrian friendly

2. Mix of driveway and on-street parking – driveway much more successful
3. Quite a few houses occupied during day by elderly so feels safe and children can play out
4. Cleanliness and maintenance generally good, apart from one overgrown bit
5. Gardens in good condition; planted boxes nice, two green spaces for different uses and allotments, mix of trees and grass in green spaces. Planted boxes at entrance are pleasant
6. Station within easy reach



Willowbank: The properties are well looked after and have off street parking

### 3.3.2 *What do we dislike about it?*

1. Children play in one part too much
2. One part has too many cars parked for the road space on a bend at the top of the hill

### 3.3.3 *What do we need to work on?*

1. Pretty accessible but perhaps a crossing at the entrance is needed
2. Signage could be clearer to better differentiate between the “two parts”
3. Sign the way to Pipers Lane so that people know they can access the High Street from there, but the point of access can be a bit muddy
4. Signage/map and lighting would make the place more accessible and more welcoming
5. The place could be made more pleasant through more planted boxes at the points where there are different streets

## 3.4 **Brightling Road**

This is an access route to Robertsbridge from Etchingam, Brightling and points east, with a mix of building types and ages in a ribbon development. Small modern developments in no-through roads are found at the western end (Oakland Drive, Hackwood) about 1 mile from the centre.

### 3.4.1 *What do we like about this place?*

1. Shops and community facilities are accessible from here
2. A community bus service is available

3. The station is easily accessible on foot
4. Open country is easily accessible via a network of footpaths
5. Mature trees down one side of road



Brightling Road with limited pavement and poor quality road surfaces

#### 3.4.2 *What do we dislike about it?*

1. Some users of Brightling Road do not respect the speed limit
2. No pedestrian crossings but with current volumes of traffic there is no obvious need
3. There are no officially-designated play streets
4. Commuters parking on Brightling Road and elsewhere, because station parking is expensive
5. There are some pavements that are in a poor condition and are mostly non-existent west of the junction with Bishops Lane
6. Poor surface drainage is evident in some areas. Gutters and drains are unable to be cleared because of permanent obstruction by commuter parking
7. There seems to be a problem with the structure of the roads: potholes occur frequently
8. The upper western section has no pavements or verges for much of its length
9. Gets a lot of traffic including big lorries but otherwise not too bad except during school run with lots of buses and private vehicles

#### 3.4.3 *What do we need to work on?*

1. A parish survey some years ago reached no consensus on street lighting
2. Most streets are clearly named although Brightling Road is less obvious

### 3.5 **Heathfield Gardens**

This is a former council and social housing development, off the south end of George Hill with a mix of family and single homes. Most of the development is 'no through road' with limited off street parking.

#### 3.5.1 *What do we like about this place?*

1. Firstly, looking at the Eastern end, the entrance looks open and spacious from George Hill: grass verges and raised footpaths seem to push buildings back from the road

2. There are surrounding trees and fields in view
3. Footpaths are in reasonable condition and mostly pedestrian-friendly
4. There is a mixture of housing completed around 1950: flats, bungalows and houses – originally social housing and now partially privately owned
5. There is a children’s play/grassy area on the boundary between Eastern and Western parts of Heathfield Gardens. At the far end of this space, there are steps that lead down into Bishops Lane, to connect with the footpath, across the road, leading to Willowbank.
6. Looking at the Western end, there is a newer estate built in the late 80s – 90s; here there are some views, rather more hemmed in than at the Eastern end.
7. By modern standards (compared for example with Willowbank and Mill Rise) the estate is airy and spacious with gardens and hedges in the front, and plenty of parking.
8. There is a traditional post box and a large chestnut tree of note
9. Traffic calming measures - humps and narrowed road build-outs - are in place because Bishops Lane is often used as a short cut to Brightling Road avoiding the village centre (and railway line)



General Street-scene

### 3.5.2 *What do we dislike about it?*

1. The older, Eastern end lacks parking facilities so that drivers have to park on the congested George Hill, or some park over verges that turn into mud-slides. This detracts from the appearance of the area
2. Ugly metal fencing along edge of some of pavements

### 3.5.3 *What do we need to work on?*

1. Remove or improve look of fencing by high pavement
2. Planting to improve general appearance of area
3. Improve maintenance and decoration of properties

*Please note that additional pictures of Heathfield Gardens are contained within appendix 2.*

## 3.6 Bishops Lane

This historic route connects George Hill to Brightling Road, by-passing the village centre. There is limited development on the road, and no pavements. The lane goes downhill from Heathfield Gardens to Darwell Stream, which lies on an S-bend under the railway bridge, before rising uphill towards Brightling Road.

### 3.6.1 *What do we like about this place?*

1. The Western end of Bishops Lane is not built up, although a few small private houses extend from the estate on the North side
2. It is an atmospheric, historic, narrow country lane, tree lined between embankments on both sides
3. Bishops Meadow is a public open space and wild flower meadow, managed by the Parish Council (on a 99 year lease from Rother District Council)
4. Glottenham Lane leads to open country and footpaths to Mountfield
5. The footpath to Willowbank is well used as a direct route from Heathfield Gardens to the centre of the village - valued by pedestrians, walkers and people exercising dogs

### 3.6.2 *What do we dislike about it?*

1. There are driveways off the road into private properties and to Glottenham Manor Nursing Home and this increases the number and the size of traffic using the lane
2. The designated footpath route crossing the lane, descending from the play area in Heathfield Gardens, and steeply rising up the embankment northwards into the fields has steps but no railing
3. There has been inappropriate clearance at the bottom of Bishops Lane of established trees and undergrowth, which have been replaced by a suburban-looking grass verge

### 3.6.3 *What do we need to work on?*

1. There are no ditches or drains to manage water running down from the embankments and off the lane towards the stream at the entrance to Glottenham Manor
2. There is no footpath. Despite the narrow, curved road, this is used as part of the rat run to Brightling Road and can be dangerous for pedestrians, and also for drivers, some who take the blind corners and S-bend at speed
3. Possible footpath re-direction for easier access, and give an off-road path along side of lane

## 3.7 George Hill

This is the main route into the centre from the south, giving access to the A21 to Hastings. It has a variety of historic buildings with the potential development site of Grove Farm on the eastern side.

### 3.7.1 *What do we like about this place?*

1. George Hill is a main entrance to the ancient village, providing a valuable vista of open countryside to the east and north

2. Most recent development is limited to the western side of the road, including two small estates: Blenheim Court and George Close which have designated parking areas
3. The new developments are tile-hung or weather-boarded, thus in keeping with listed buildings beyond
4. There is an disused brownfield site previously occupied by Countrycrafts, and which was once the ancient site of Robertsbridge Market, assigned royal status
5. At either end of George Hill there are listed buildings: to the South, George Hill House, and opposite, Yew Lodge; to the North, The George Hotel and the C14th village centre
6. To the North, in addition to The George Inn and The Grove (now used as a youth centre), there is a Sussex Barn with attached cart shed and a little Victorian cow shed at Grove Farm. All of these buildings are in the Robertsbridge conservation area
7. On the Eastern side of George Hill is open farm land, criss-crossed by hedgerows with trees. The open fields give a feeling of light and space and the appearance of endless countryside beyond, since one cannot see the A21, which borders the land to the East
8. The fields and the farm animals, close to the centre of the village, ensure an immediate connection with its rural roots and history
9. To confirm the special nature of this farmland, archaeological investigations record artefacts and remains connected with the early history of the village



The George Inn which is an attractive property in the Conservation Area



The Grove is another example of the village's rich heritage

### 3.7.2 What do we dislike about it?

1. Due to the lack of alternative parking, George Hill is used as a car park by commuters using the rail station, staff of the Primary School and Children's Centre, parents and carers dropping off and collecting children, and people using the village stores and other facilities. It is a one-way road for much of the time, especially between 8.30 and 9.15am and 3 to 4pm
2. George Hill acts as a funnel for water run-off from the countryside and also from the paved and built-on areas. The drains don't cope, although some are cleaned regularly
3. After leaves drop in the autumn and during periods of freezing weather, footpaths are hazardous, slippery and thus a considerable danger to pedestrians
4. Speeding cars through the village was previously challenged by an initiative with the local police. However, such initiatives no longer exists



George Hill: the road is often congested with cars during the peak hours of the day

### 3.7.3 *What do we need to work on?*

1. Re-establish the speedwatch group and review speed limits
2. Improve road and surface drainage
3. Consider improved school drop off and pick up arrangements

*Please note that additional pictures of George Hill are contained within appendix 3.*

## 3.8 **Fair Lane & Fayre Meadow**

Fair Lane is the historic route to Robertsbridge Abbey and Salehurst from Robertsbridge. It has numerous period properties, mainly on the north side. It leads to Fayre Meadow, a modern development of bungalows in a cul-de-sac.

### 3.8.1 *What do we like about this place?*

1. Most buildings on north side of the lane add strongly to the village character and are in the conservation area
2. Attractive, historic materials are used in the properties
3. 1-4 Fair Lane have been identified as the oldest building in the village
4. Victorian and Edwardian buildings feature traditional blue Sussex bricks
5. The lamp posts are in keeping with the area



Attractive, historic materials are used in the properties

### 3.8.2 *What do we dislike about it?*

1. A few of the properties require some maintenance to improve their condition/appearance
2. Fair Lane is narrow and has a substantial amount of parking which causes traffic problems
3. Parked vehicles make it difficult to access the Mission Room
4. Access to Mission Room is dangerous especially in wet weather and the ironwork stair rail looks unloved (like others on the High Pavement)
5. The lane is not pedestrian friendly, because of narrow pavement and on street parking, especially at the bottom where there is regularly illegal parking
6. Street furniture is problematic; the grit bin is unattractive and a sign is hidden

### 3.8.3 *What do we need to work on?*

1. Change the dedicated on street parking to the south side rather than the north side as it is at present. That would facilitate vehicular access to the Mission Room and free up the view of the medieval houses, now obscured by parked vehicles
2. The electricity sub-station at the end could be more disguised
3. Some of the verges could be tidier
4. Attention could be paid to the area in front of the Methodist Church conversion
5. The conifers in front of the terrace on south side could be cut down
6. The conversion of the Methodist Chapel into apartments is poor quality
7. Provide a car park on the land to the end of Fair Lane

*Please note that additional pictures of Fair Lane & Fair Meadow are contained within appendix 4.*

## 3.9 **Northbridge Street & The Clappers**

Northbridge Street is the main access to the centre from the north via the A21 roundabout. It has a mix of period buildings, and gives access to the potential development at the Mill site. The Clappers connects Northbridge Street with the centre over the flood plain of the river Rother. The recreation ground adjoins it.

### 3.9.1 *What do we like about this place?*

1. Adults walk their children daily to the primary school in the village (about a mile away) and many walk their dogs at the Mill site along the river – often driving to the entrance and parking their car there
2. The area is very easy to understand, as it is a single road leading in/from the village
3. This section feels cut off from the rest of the village and isolated, although historically this has always been the case and it can be seen as a positive aspect, creating a wonderfully coherent independent “village” in its own right. The river acts as a boundary between here and the main Robertsbridge, yet it is only a 5 minute walk away
4. Most buildings are occupied and the crime rate is minimal
5. Gardens are exposed
6. The high number of wood stoves and open fires in use
7. The connection between homes and surrounding nature and the awareness this brings to our connection to the natural world
8. The close proximity of livestock in the surrounding fields, forming a connection between people and animals
9. The river walks and fields are a natural habitat for all kinds of wildlife. This amenity provides a beautiful and idyllic backdrop to Northbridge Street, linking its past with the present and keeping at bay over development and over ‘tidying’



There are many positive features about this area including the heritage, it is easy to understand, the properties are occupied and well maintained. However, parking and speeding cars are issues of concern

### 3.9.2 *What do we dislike about it?*

1. Crossing this road is dangerous, especially at the blind bend near the Mill site.
2. There are no pedestrian crossings
3. Traffic regularly exceeds the 30 mph speed limit adding to the danger. Traffic includes a regular bus service, lorries and vans as well as cars and the occasional horse and cart!
4. Disabled access is severely limited

5. This section is dominated by vehicles proceeding along a narrow road, with cars parked, making it one-way in places
6. Pavements only exist on one side of the road
7. There is little off street parking as the houses front onto the road
8. Parking is an issue here. It is mostly on street parking causing constriction of the road. With the planned developments at the Mill site construction traffic will make this worse. And the subsequent housing and influx of people will add to the traffic congestion and parking issues, as many people currently use the entrance for parking
9. The paths are not well maintained or signposted
10. There is insufficient public transport to take the elderly or infirm into the village
11. The mill is derelict and the old school is dilapidated
12. There is extensive growth of the Japanese Knotweed along the riverbank

### 3.9.3 What do we need to work on?

1. A foot/cycle path to the station across the fields would be extremely useful and would reduce traffic congestion and commuter parking issues
2. A few discreet signs pointing out the history and significance of some of the old houses would help
3. Traffic calming and a limit on lorry weights would reduce the congestion burden
4. Publicly accessible open green spaces adjacent the mill building and around the mill building and improved existing public spaces, especially if the Mill site is completely covered in housing
5. The opportunity for Northbridge Street to have its very own 'village green' with the mill pond etc., which is missing from Robertsbridge as a whole
6. Less intrusive street lighting
7. Ensure flooding does not return and that any new developments do not add to the risk of flooding from surface run-off or alterations to the flood defences
8. Better connection between areas is needed, with existing bridges maintained and possibly new ones
9. Water is in abundance and so water power at the Mill site could be harnessed
10. The inherent efficiency of the many mediaeval buildings – i.e. warm in winter, cool in summer – but probably poorly insulated with damp?
11. If the village had its own "hopper shopper" (an electric hop on/off free shuttle bus) then parking and congestion from cars would be reduced

*Please note that additional pictures of Northbridge Street are contained within appendix 5.*

## 3.10 Salehurst & Rotherview

Salehurst is the original pre-Norman village about 0.5 miles from Robertsbridge, with the church and abbey site nearby, and now relatively small. Rotherview area is a more recent development (1940's) of social housing and private properties in separate no through roads.

### 3.10.1 What do we like about this place?

1. There is a good mix of social housing and mid to upper range housing
2. Salehurst feels very safe
3. The streets are clearly named around the parish church
4. Lighting is sufficient in Rotherview
5. There are not too many vehicles passing through
6. Most houses have off street parking, there is no perceived parking problem in the area and a car park is not considered necessary
7. Vehicular access is easy from the A21 roundabout
8. Pedestrian access is excellent with footpaths and twittens serving many areas
9. A bus stop in Northbridge Street provides transport to Hastings and Hawkhurst
10. The area is generally clean and well maintained
11. Springfield Wood is owned by the Woodland Trust and was planted to celebrate the Millennium and now provides a beautiful, safe place to enjoy
12. There are numerous footpaths together with bridleways that are all well used
13. Walking is made easy with a pedestrian crossing with traffic lights linking Salehurst with Northbridge Street and the rest of the village
14. Cycling is easy except when it comes to crossing the A21
15. There is a butcher's shop selling local produce, a popular pub and the parish Church
16. The shops in Robertsbridge are accessible to those that are mobile
17. The floodplain across to the River Rother and beyond creates a fantastic natural green space that cannot be developed
18. Farmland is in regular and diverse use keeping livestock and growing crops



The church and the quiet country roads which do not witness much traffic



An example of the attractive properties



The surrounding farmland is in regular and diverse use keeping livestock and crops

### 3.10.2 *What do we dislike about it?*

1. The Salehurst Halt does get busy and has no car park, and when there is an event at the church the lane can become very busy with roadside-only parking
2. Traffic jams on the narrow lane are an issue
3. There is no sign indicating that you are entering Salehurst
4. The streets are not clearly named in the more rural areas beyond the Parish Church
5. There has been damage to the Andrews Close and Coronation Cottages road signs that need repairing
6. One way working has been deployed by police in the past when a significant event has taken place at the church, but this does not happen anymore since we lost our PCSO
7. The A21 detracts from its appeal as it separates Salehurst from Northbridge Street
8. A bus stop is some distance away from Salehurst (10mins)
9. The mainline station is about a 20-30 minute walk

### 3.10.3 *What do we need to work on?*

1. A footpath all the way along Church Lane to the church and pub would be ideal as many people walk to these two establishments. However, this may not be in keeping with the rural area
2. An extended 30 mph speed limit would make it safer to walk along Church Lane
3. A sign indicating that you are entering Salehurst may be useful for identification and possible traffic calming
4. Salehurst can be made more accessible and more welcoming, possibly through the introduction of a 'gateway' to the village, or some bulb planting on banks and verges which may enhance the look
5. Increased mowing of the large verges as you come off the A21 would enhance the look of the area
6. Salehurst can be made safer and more pleasant through regular maintenance of the small copse by the roundabout that can feel threatening after dark as this is becoming overgrown
7. Springfield Wood is not well known and could benefit from additional signage and advertising

8. Most of the houses are built on the north side hill and rainwater run-off is significant and could be harvested more widely

### 3.11 Mill Rise

This is a recent (1990's) high density, self-contained development of executive style homes with off street parking and open street plan, close to the mainline station.

#### 3.11.1 What do we like about this place?

1. Self-contained with numerous small closes and no through road
2. Consistent style of building
3. Mainly open plan, with few hedges or fences
4. Quiet (no through traffic) and generally well-maintained
5. Convenient for station and village
6. Pedestrian-friendly
7. Open space and countryside nearby
8. Good street lighting



Properties are generally well maintained



Roads are self-contained with numerous small closes and no through road

#### 3.11.2 What do we dislike about it?

1. Very large executive houses on very small plots, with small front gardens
2. Very small gaps for "detached" homes
3. No green verges or public open spaces
4. No litter bins
5. Dark materials and crowded development give a claustrophobic feel
6. Mediocre architecture

### 3.11.3 What do we need to work on?

1. Consider controls on commuter parking

## 3.12 Langham Road

This is a road of mainly detached properties with off street parking, un-adopted and un-surfaced for much of its length, with no pavements but limited traffic. Knelle Road leads to Robertsbridge Community College.

There are not many gap sites, and housing density is near saturation. The road is adopted at the lower end east of the junction with Knelle Road, with pavements, verges and trees. It is un-adopted and un-surfaced at the upper end west of Knelle Road, with no pavements, but generally wide verges. Bugsell Lane leads off at the western end to Bugsell Farm and is an unmade track. It is a mixed residential rural or semi-rural area, largely nestled in the undulating landscape.

### 3.12.1 What do we like about this place?

1. Gives impression of being well-cared-for
2. It is a piecemeal development but perhaps because there is no one dominant style there is nothing which is strikingly out of place
3. Expected density for detached and semi-detached houses with decent size gardens
4. Most properties have front gardens, with numerous trees, hedges, very few walls, some fences, no railings
5. The Spinney is clearly work of one developer but otherwise no pattern
6. Handsome double row of pollards at lower end
7. Some dog bins, salt bins, post box and one bench
8. Bugsell Lane is un-surfaced road with a rural feel
9. Langham, Bugsell and Knelle are pedestrian friendly either because little traffic or there are pavements
10. Undulating landscape with views of the AONB through gaps between buildings at various points and from upstairs windows as roads are on hillside



Bugsell Lane is unpaved road with a rural feel



A mix of building styles reflecting the ages they were built

### 3.12.2 *What do we dislike about it?*

1. No public open spaces but substantial gardens surrounded by agricultural land in the AONB
2. Roadside is mixture of banks and grass with some pavements, not all pedestrian-friendly
3. A mix of building styles reflecting the ages they were built but nothing obviously of particular architectural merit
4. Sparse street lighting

### 3.12.3 *What do we need to work on?*

1. There is no clear priority at the junction of Knelle Road with Langham Road
2. Piecemeal maintenance of unmade section leads to inconsistent road surface quality

## 3.13 **Bellhurst Road**

This is a largely 20<sup>th</sup> century development of various types of homes, leading to a cul-de-sac of social family homes.

### 3.13.1 *What do we like about this place?*

1. Variety: mix of private local authority large/small/detached/bungalows
2. Mix of ages and styles: some Victorian but otherwise inter and post-war
3. Some very new: weatherboard: brick: pebble-dash: tile-hung
4. Mostly quite large plots: many large front gardens especially higher up the road
5. Hedges/fences/walls: very varied
6. Pavements: tree-lined bottom half: top half grass verges
7. Wide, maintained, grass verges: lower half with trees
8. Open feel: views of AONB all round. Style of the houses: weatherboard looks attractive
9. Lovely panoramic views of AONB
10. Overall appearance is attractive and open

### 3.13.2 *What do we dislike about it?*

1. All good family houses but with one Victorian exception nothing of outstanding architectural interest
2. Two new houses seem out of keeping as they have less space between than the others in the area.

### 3.13.3 *What do we need to work on?*

1. No benches
2. Otherwise little obvious scope or need for change

### **3.14 Glenleigh Walk**

This is a recent development (1990's) of mainly larger executive style homes with off street parking and easy pedestrian access to the mainline station.

#### *3.14.1 What do we like about this place?*

1. All built at the same time giving a consistent appearance
2. Mainly brick with tiled roofs and double-glazed wood frame windows. Good quality materials
3. Large plots with large attractive gardens, mainly open plan, most with horticultural dividers
4. Extremely well-maintained, with exclusive/expensive feel
5. Convenient for station and centre
6. Good view from the top of the road over AONB
7. All pedestrian-friendly: not polluted: no through road

#### *3.14.2 What do we dislike about it?*

1. No green verges
2. No public open spaces
3. Tarmac pavement on one side

#### *3.14.3 What do we need to work on?*

1. Little obvious scope for improvement

### **3.15 Outer Areas**

These are the less built-up areas within the parish but outside the specific areas surveyed above, surrounding access routes to the centre: A21 to Hastings, A21 to London, Brightling Road, Ludpit Lane, Rocks Hill, Beech House Lane, Great Wigsell, Redlands Lane and Poppinghole Lane.

A good network of footpaths connect with these routes providing access to the countryside for walkers, as well as a network of bridleways that could be improved to provide a valuable leisure resource and improved working access.

#### *3.15.1 What do we like about these places?*

1. Generally attractive surroundings and buildings, with little obvious inappropriate development
2. A good variety of interesting landscapes features: undulating landscape, ancient lanes, small fields and a flood plain with water features
3. Numerous period buildings, ancient farmsteads, few intrusive farm buildings
4. An extensive network of footpaths and bridleways
5. There are two allotment sites, both in Station Road: adjacent to Culverwells, and to the rear of the Village Hall, that are both well used

### 3.15.2 *What do we dislike about them?*

1. Poor maintenance of some lanes, with blocked drains and poor drainage causing rapid surface damage (eg at the current time Ludpit Lane, Bishops Lane)
2. Rubbish regularly dumped in lay-by on A21
3. Need for constant vigilance and effort to maintain good access to rights of way
4. Pedestrian unfriendly traffic on some key walking routes (e.g. Bishops Lane, Church Lane)

### 3.15.3 *What do we need to work on?*

1. Reporting and obtaining maintenance of roads and rights way
2. Maintain and develop voluntary maintenance effort where necessary
3. Measures to improve pedestrian safety on all highways
4. Seek to develop rights of way network, especially all-weather surfaces for key bridleway routes to allow horse-riding, cycling, wheelchairs and baby buggies (see map)
5. Maintain vigilance in the planning system to avoid inappropriate development

## 3.16 **Open Spaces**

The parish has a number of open spaces with public access, for example: Pocket Park, Bishops Meadow and the Recreation Ground with football pitches owned by the Parish Council; the cricket pitch owned by the Cricket Club; Wennow Wood and Springfield Wood owned by the Woodland Trust. In addition, rights of way give access to many privately owned fields and woods.

### 3.16.1 *What do we like about these places?*

1. Opportunities for leisure and exercise activities
2. Most add to the rural character and attractiveness of the parish
3. Provide opportunities for community activities
4. The cricket club has its own ground and excellent clubhouse
5. The football club has use of the pitch on the parish recreation ground

### 3.16.2 *What do we dislike about them?*

1. Both the cricket pitch and the football pitch flood most winters
2. Occasional inappropriate features e.g. barbed wire fencing
3. Need for constant maintenance by public or volunteer bodies

### 3.16.3 *What do we need to work on?*

1. Maintaining voluntary effort and liaison with ESCC Highways Dept
2. Maintaining liaison with public bodies such as Parish, District and County Councils, Environment Agency etc as well as private landowners
3. Seeking improvements in flood prevention and ecological diversity
4. Seeking opportunities to enhance and add to the community assets

5. The recent requirement for the Environment Agency to increase flood defences by 20% to account for global warming needs to be addressed
6. More could be done to reduce the risk of flooding by, for example, remodelling the upstream flood plains to hold back water and re-establishing reed beds.

## 4.0 Implications for the Neighbourhood Plan

The information contained within sections 2 and 3 of this Placecheck have identified a number of issues that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group could investigate further.

These issues can be divided up into two categories:

- Land-use
- Non land-use

The land-use related issues such as housing, design and protection of heritage can be included within the plan along with a planning policy. These issues are of a nature that will influence development within the parish.

In contrast, the non land-use related issues cannot be contained within the main body of the plan. However, these issues tend to be related to community aspirations that are important to local residents. In such cases as this, it is recommended that these issues be included in an appendix to the plan. It is then up to the local community to consider taking these aspirations forward as part of a parish plan or similar.

*Land-use issues include:*

- Flooding
- Protection of heritage
- Protection of character
- Design
- Highways – including traffic calming
- Open space – allocations and protection of existing spaces

*Non land-use issues include:*

- Parking
- Renewable energy schemes
- High street improvements
- Provision of signage/lighting/planting
- Provision of a footpath/cycle path to the station
- Historical interpretation boards
- Leisure

It is important to note that these are not proposals and that the list is not limited to that stated above.

- **Appendix 1: Placecheck Proforma**
- Salehurst & Robertsbridge Neighbourhood Development Plan
- Placecheck  
Questions to consider and answer



<b>A special place</b>	
<u>What makes the village special or unique?</u>	
<u>Why does it look the way it does?</u>	
<u>What local activities or events have made it like this?</u>	
<u>Why do we like this place?</u>	
<u>What can we make more of/What potential is there to enhance the place?</u>	

**A well-connected, accessible and welcoming place**

<p><u>How accessible is the place? What limits how easy it is to get around?</u>  <i>Is the place pedestrian-friendly, or vehicle-dominated?; Are there adults and children who use the place to walk or cycle to work, to school or to the shops; for exercise and leisure; for play or pleasure, to meet, and to enjoy?; Places where the speed of traffic needs to be reduced; Places where new routes and connections are needed; Ease of crossing roads and streets; Pedestrian and cycle crossings: well positioned or lacking; Is the place welcoming to new visitors, as well as under-represented groups?; Walls, fences, guardrails, steep gradients and other barriers to movement; Car clubs, car club parking spaces and electric car charging points; play streets, and home zones;</i></p>	
<p><u>How understandable is the place? Does anything make it confusing?</u>  <i>Consider issues such as: How easy is it to find your way around: are there landmarks, buildings, works of art, or other features creating views and helping people find their way around?; Signs: too many or too few, appealing or garish, uniform or clashing; Street and building names: clearly visible or not; Plaques and information boards; Lighting to help people find their way around, highlight landmarks and attractive buildings, or disguise eyesores;</i></p>	
<p><u>How well does the parking work?</u>  <i>Consider issues such as: What types of parking are there (on-street parking, surface car park, multi-storey car park, undercroft or mechanised parking, parking on front gardens, parking courts, garages and car ports, etc.? Which are more successful, and why?</i></p>	
<p><u>How can the place be made more accessible and more welcoming?</u></p>	

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<b>A safe and pleasant place</b>	
<p><u>What makes this place – and its street(s) and public spaces – safe and pleasant? What detracts from that?</u></p> <p><i>Consider issues such as: the mix of uses, is there sense of ownership by the whole community, is the village inclusive, does the village feel safe throughout the day? Vacancy rate of the buildings, Condition of the buildings.</i></p>	
<p><u>How successful are the streets and spaces underfoot? What could be improved?</u></p> <p><i>Consider issues such as Pedestrian routes; materials; Cleanliness and maintenance; Drainage and Verges and planted areas</i></p>	
<p><u>How can the place be made safer and more pleasant?</u></p>	
<p><u>How do people enjoy nature here? What is missing?</u></p> <p><i>Consider issues such as Parks, or other green and open spaces; Biodiversity; Green corridors along natural features or roads, rivers; trees; planting; Allotments; Hedgerows; Sports grounds; Nature reserves. Also consider the quality of places.</i></p>	

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<b>A planet-friendly place</b>	
<u>What makes this place planet-friendly? How are scarce resources wasted?</u>	
<u>Alternatives to the private car and local access issues</u>  <i>Consider issues such as: Is walking and cycling made easy and attractive?; is public transport within easy reach; Are car sharing schemes in place?; Are shops, parks and community facilities within walking distance?.</i>	
<u>What other features makes the place planet-friendly?</u>  <i>Consider issues such as: Habitats encouraging biodiversity: water, hedges, trees, unmanaged land, wildlife corridors</i>	

## Appendix 2: Additional Pictures of Heathfield Gardens



### Appendix 3: Additional Pictures of George Hill



## Appendix 4: Additional Pictures of Fair Lane & Fayre Meadow



## Appendix 5: Additional Pictures of Northbridge Street

