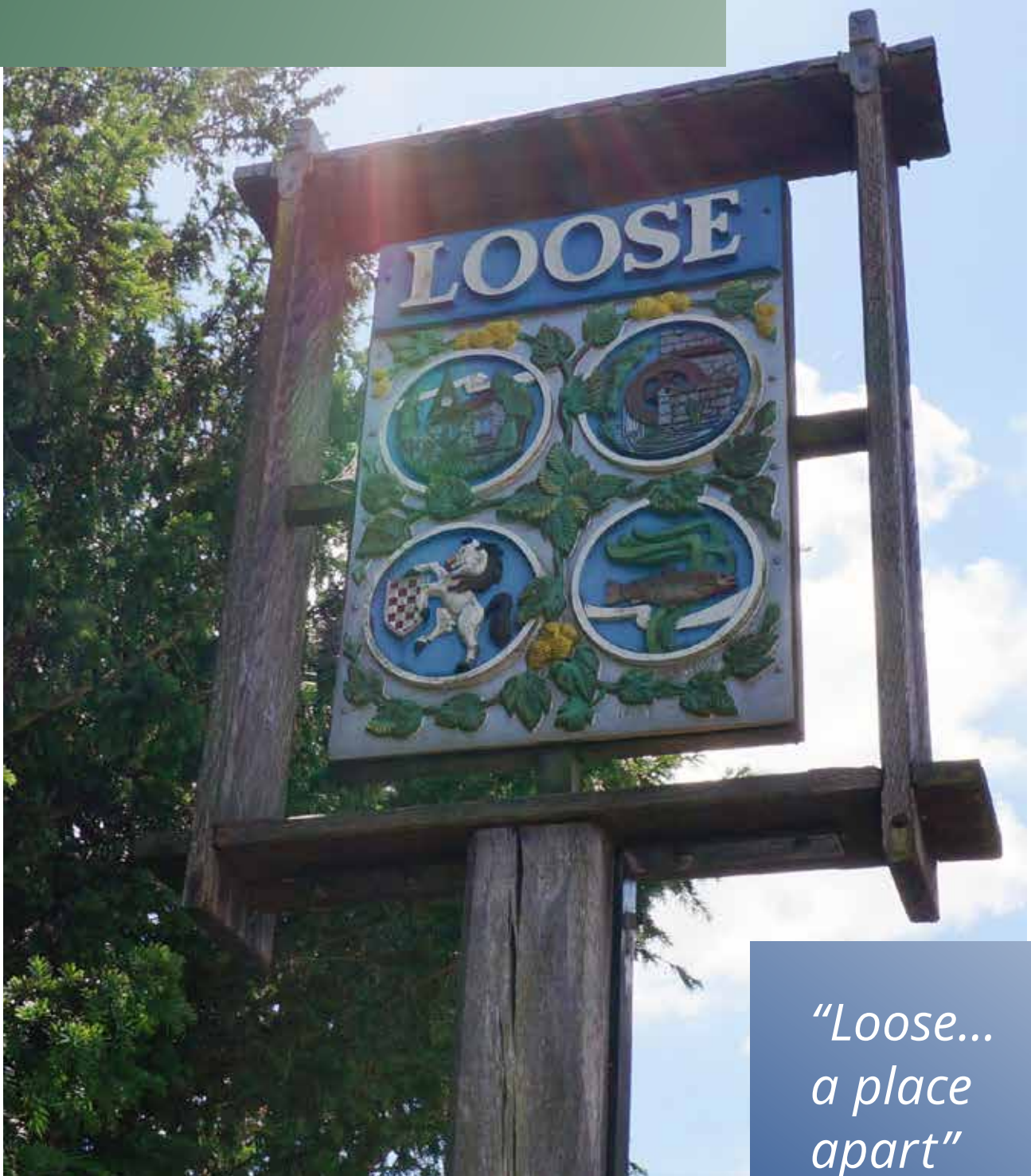


Loose Parish Council

Neighbourhood Plan

Submission Version

June 2018



*“Loose...
a place
apart”*

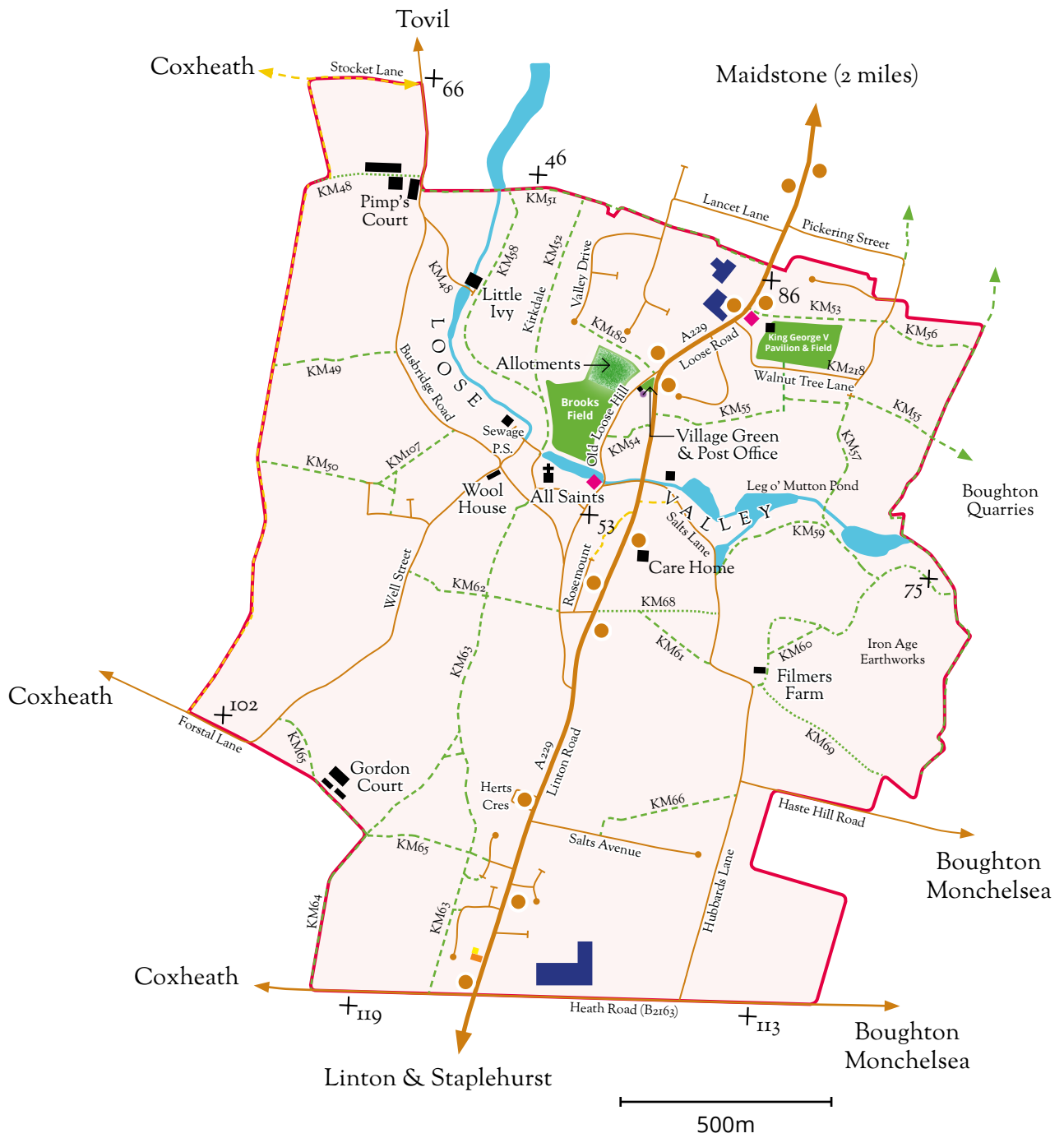











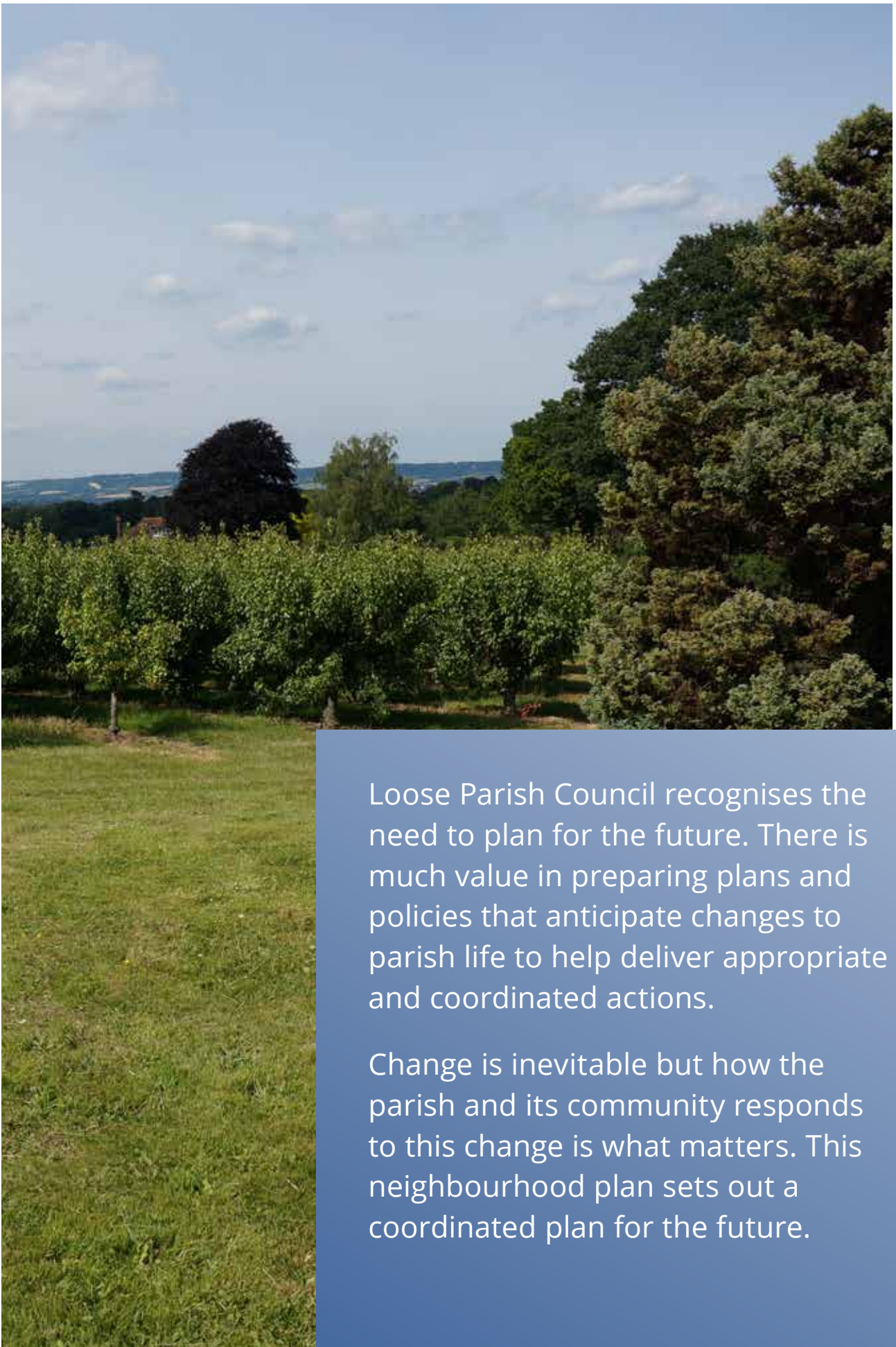


Figure 1

Loose Parish (2018)



- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|------------------------|
|  | Parish Boundary |  | Public House |
|  | Road |  | School |
|  | Loose Stream & Mill Ponds |  | Petrol Filling Station |
|  | Footpath |  | Bus Stop |
|  | Bridleway |  | Spot Heights (m) |
|  | Byway | | |



Loose Parish Council recognises the need to plan for the future. There is much value in preparing plans and policies that anticipate changes to parish life to help deliver appropriate and coordinated actions.

Change is inevitable but how the parish and its community responds to this change is what matters. This neighbourhood plan sets out a coordinated plan for the future.



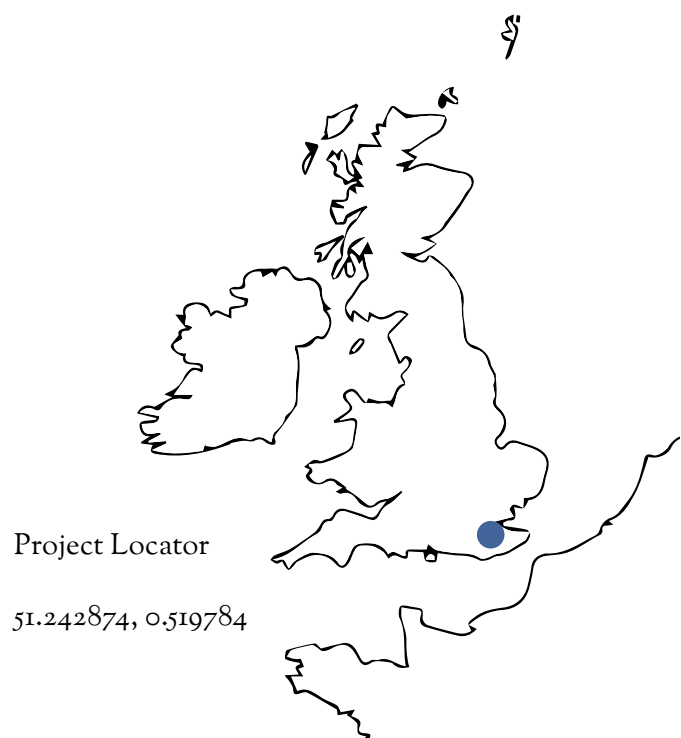
Feria Urbanism is a planning and design studio that specialises in urban design, urban planning, neighbourhood strategies, public participation and community engagement. Established in 2007, we have been involved in a diverse range of planning and design projects across the UK.

Contact for further information

- Richard Eastham
- richard@feria-urbanism.eu
- www.feria-urbanism.eu
- + 44 (0) 7816 299 909
- + 44 (0) 1202 548 676

Document reference 109_Q_180611_Submission-Plan_FINAL

All maps within this document are reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office. © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution and civil proceedings. Maidstone Borough Council Licence No. 100019636, 2011.



Contents

6	Background
12	Loose Parish Context
16	Landscape Context
20	Planning Policy Framework
22	Neighbourhood Plan Objectives
26	Access & Movement Policies
27	<i>Policy AM1 Improve the Pedestrian Environment</i>
32	<i>Policy AM2 The Village Green</i>
34	Landscape Protection Policies
35	<i>Policy LP1 Views Across Village & Countryside</i>
39	<i>Policy LP2 Area of Local Landscape Value</i>
40	<i>Policy LP3 Design of Development in the Countryside</i>
45	<i>Policy LP4 Natural Environment in Loose</i>
46	<i>Policy LP5 Designated Local Green Spaces</i>
52	Design Quality Policies
53	<i>Policy DQ1 Design Quality</i>
60	<i>Policy DQ2 Protection & Enhancement of the Loose Conservation Area</i>
64	Next Steps

1. Background

How this neighbourhood plan was developed



1.1 This submission version of the Loose Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by Loose Parish Council on behalf of those who live and work within the parish of Loose. The plan sets out a vision for the parish until 2031 and is supported by a set of planning polices and a series of specific projects.

1.2 In accordance with the neighbourhood planning regulations, this plan has been prepared through extensive community consultation.

What is the Loose Neighbourhood Plan?

1.3 Neighbourhood planning is a community-led process introduced by the Government to encourage local people to shape and influence development within the places where they live and work. They are produced by community forum groups or parish or town councils.

1.4 Neighbourhood plans are policy-based community-led plans which correspond to the Local Plan. In this case, the Local Plan is prepared by Maidstone Borough Council.

1.5 Neighbourhood plans can influence or allocate new housing, produce design policies for allocated sites or for general development. They can protect or identify new community facilities and identify green spaces to be protected from future development proposals.

1.6 The Government introduced the opportunity for local communities to prepare neighbourhood plans through amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Localism Act 2011 and through new regulations, Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, which set out the requirements for neighbourhood plans.

1.7 In Loose, the preparation of the neighbourhood plan is being led by a steering group formed of Parish Councillors and residents that reports to Loose Parish Council.

1.8 There is an ongoing dialogue between Loose Parish Council and Maidstone Borough Council to ensure neighbourhood plan policies conform with national and local policy, as required by the neighbourhood plan regulations.

Progress 2013 — 2017

1.9 Work on the Loose Neighbourhood Plan began on 11th February 2013 when an application was made by Loose Parish Council to Maidstone Borough Council to designate the boundary of the parish to be the boundary for the Loose Neighbourhood Plan. This application request was approved by Maidstone Borough Council on 4th October 2013.

1.10 In 2014, the parish council engaged FERIA Urbanism, a design and planning practice based in Bournemouth, to act as consultants. The process in early 2014 comprised site visits by the consultant team in March and July. There were also several key other events to engage the community:

1.11 At the Annual Parish Meeting on 30th April 2014 the outline of a neighbourhood plan and its benefits were presented to the meeting verbally and by a poster display. The well-attended meeting was supportive.

1.12 In May 2014, Loose Parish Council delivered a questionnaire to all properties and businesses in the parish. The questionnaire invited comments about Loose as a place. The comments received have been used to inform the subsequent stages of the process.

1.13 On most Saturdays throughout August and September 2014, manned poster and discussion points were set up around the parish to inform residents about the neighbourhood plan process and to receive comments. Comments were generally supportive and these views have been taken forward to assist the development of this submission plan.

1.14 Visioning Event held on 10th September 2014 to examine some of the critical issues in more detail. This event was attended by over 100 people drawn from across the parish.

1.15 Three-Day Design Forum held on 21st, 22nd and 23rd October 2014. This was a design-led exercise that examined how change can be designed and planned across Loose parish.

1.16 Two reports were produced later in 2014 following the autumn events, “Loose Neighbourhood Plan, Results Of The Village Visioning Event” and “Loose Neighbourhood Plan, Report From The Three Day Design Forum”. These two reports set out some key themes and ideas for the emerging neighbourhood plan.

1.17 Annual Parish Meeting on 15th April 2015 included a manned poster display plus a verbal presentation on progress so far, and the three possible policy areas. The display included a visitors location map (e.g. place an orange dot on the map) and a photo exhibition called “Aspects of Loose” that invited comments about what was liked or disliked. The three emerging planning policy areas were displayed and comments on them were invited. All comments received about the work were positive.

1.18 The Annual Duck Race held in Brooks Field on 25th May 2015 was a very popular and well-attended event (e.g. 2,000 to 3,000 people). There was a manned poster display again, plus photos. There was a lot of interest and comments were favourable.

1.19 Loose Valley Care Home, Open Day on 22nd August 2015 included a manned poster display. The event consisted mainly of dialogue between members of the steering group, employees and visitors. The emphasis of this event was on “hard to reach groups”.

1.20 The Loose Parish Fete held at King George V Playing Field on 5th September 2015 also included a manned poster display. The three policy areas were shown with a breakdown of the stages of neighbourhood plan preparation. Visitors were invited to support (or not) the policies with a sticky dot vote. There was a unanimous “yes” vote but not a large sample. A crowd of around 500 attended the village fete and many engaged in conversation at the stall about the neighbourhood plan.

1.21 In late 2015, the parish council held a three day exhibition event where a draft policy document was shared with the public. The event on 5th, 7th and 8th December 2015 was well-attended by local residents and businesses. This was an opportunity to comment on a series of draft policy themes and an outline of the neighbourhood plan that had been developed over the previous months. The themes of Landscape Protection, Access & Movement and Design Quality were shared by the steering group and were largely endorsed by those in attendance. This material has since become the basis for the draft plan.

1.22 Annual Parish Meeting on 4th May 2016. A time-line showing progress to date, the current situation and what remained to be done was displayed at a manned poster and discussion point. Emphasis was placed on the importance of input by stakeholders into the pre-submission plan.

1.23 Duck Race, 30th May 2016. Again, a very well attended event. A similar approach and display was presented to that at the Annual Parish Meeting.

1.24 Loose Parish Fete on the 3rd September 2016. Considerable interest was shown in the draft work which was put out for consideration. The focus of the display was to alert stakeholders about how and where they would be able to make their comments when the pre-submission draft plan was launched into the parish and the importance of these comments.

1.25 The Annual Duck Race, 26th May 2017. A stall was set up in a prime position just inside the access gate and displayed the “timeline” used at the Annual Parish Meeting and copies of the Pre-Submission Consultation Draft was again on display for perusal. Members of the Steering Group were on hand to discuss any issues raised.

1.26 Loose Parish Fête, 2nd September 2017. This was the last face to face public engagement event. Relevant documents were put out for viewing and discussion with the stall representatives. The “orange dot” map was also utilised.

1.27 This consultation and engagement work provided a body of evidence from which the Pre-Submission Consultation Draft Plan was formulated. The views of the community were sought on this draft plan between 31st October and 13th December 2016. Responses to the Pre-Submission Consultation Draft Plan have been used to inform this Submission plan.

1.28 Throughout this period, several meetings took place between Loose Parish Council and Maidstone Borough Council officers.

Other Communication

1.29 Throughout the process, Loose Parish Council has communicated with its parishioners about the neighbourhood plan through updates in the “In and Around” newsletter, an independent monthly mail drop; through “Loose Views”, the parish council’s quarterly newsletter; its website, Facebook and once in the All Saints Church parish magazine. Updates have also been displayed on parish council notice boards and at other strategic locations. All these communications have invited opportunities for feedback and further contact.



The combination of built heritage and landscape setting in Loose is special and this neighbourhood plan sets out to protect and enhance it.

Community Consultation Events



Three-Day Design Forum was a design-led exercise that examined how change can be accommodated and planned across Loose parish.



Site visits across the parish have been conducted by members of the steering group and the appointed consultants.



The Visioning Event was attended by over 100 people drawn from across Loose parish, including youth groups.



Local residents and interest groups were involved throughout during the Three-Day Design Forum, sharing their opinions with the steering group and the appointed consultant team.



Three-Day Design Forum generated a lot of debate and discussion but also gave the neighbourhood planning process a clear focus.



Seeing sites first hand has been a key part of the process to date.



The Visioning Event asked questions about the challenges faced by different demographic groups in the parish.



The Three-Day Design Forum in October 2014 gathered a series of "position statements" from many different organisations, seen here pinned up on the red display board.

2. Loose Parish Context

Understanding the history and setting

Location

2.1 Loose is located some 3 kms south of Maidstone, around the Loose Valley, with which it forms the Loose Valley Conservation Area. The fast-flowing Loose stream, which rises near Langley, runs through the centre of the village and once supported fulling mills and paper-making industries, evidence of which can still be found. Loose village itself is situated in the Loose valley and extends along Busbridge Road towards Tovil. The parish population is currently around 2400 with around 990 individual dwellings.

History & Origins

2.2 The name is believed to be an Anglo-Saxon term “lose” meaning where pigs are kept. While its origins were in Saxon times its main period of growth was during the Industrial Revolution, when Loose, Boughton Monchelsea and Bockingford developed around the many mills powered by the Loose Stream. There are several remains of the mills, including millraces at Leg O’Mutton Pond, Gurney’s Mill, Loose Village Mill in Bridge Street, and the mill ponds at Little and Great Ivy. Along the valley are disused quarries where Kentish ragstone was once mined, some being used to build the Tower of London.

2.3 Old Loose Hill descends into Loose village and the valley, the hill being so steep that in the 18th and 19th Centuries additional horses were added to the wagon teams at the aptly named “The Change”. The road is still lined with haul stones around which ropes were tied to help relieve the horses of the weight of the carts. At the foot of the hill to the north of the stream is Brooks Field.

Housing Layouts

2.4 The civil parish of Loose lies to the south of the urban area of Maidstone. At its northern boundary with Maidstone, the area consists mainly of medium to low density housing built largely during the 1960s and 70s. There is one recent development of a much higher density at the north eastern boundary built since 2010.

2.5 Development to the south of the valley is largely along the line of the A229, Loose Road and Linton Road, which runs north-south through the parish, the housing stock dating mainly from the 1930s and 1950s with some more recent development close to the southern boundary. The Cornwallis Academy, newly built on the site of the former Cornwallis School, is the largest building and the largest employer in the parish and is also located at the southern boundary of the parish.

2.6 The historic village centre sits in the valley bottom and the building stock ranges from 12th to 20th Century. The village centre is characterised by buildings located at the back of the footway, narrow streets, steep hills and the numerous streams running through it to join the Loose Stream.

Heritage

2.7 There are 49 Listed Buildings or structures within the parish, ranging from the viaduct, designed by Thomas Telford, which carries the A229 across the valley, through houses and agricultural buildings to a number of memorials in All Saints Churchyard. The parish and village is known as a “ragstone village” and has a number of disused ragstone quarries, mainly around Well Street and towards the eastern parish boundary with Boughton Monchelsea.



“Loose — A ragstone Village” reads the welcome sign on the village green.

2.8 Those in Well Street have been subject to intermittent housing development over the last few hundred years whilst those to the east of the A229 have “returned to nature” and are now tree covered. There are also some naturally occurring ragstone outcrops at various locations within the parish.

Landscape Qualities

2.9 From the north of the parish southwards, the land falls sharply into the Loose Valley where the Loose Stream flows east to west from Langley through Boughton Monchelsea before following a sharp bend in the valley at Loose to run north towards the boundary with Tovil parish, from where it flows on for another mile before joining the River Medway.

2.10 The southern face of the valley initially rises as steeply as the northern face and then in a gentler slope to the southern parish boundary and the highest point in Loose, just over 120 metres above sea level. It is the many springs in this south face that feed a number of small streams which flow north, down the Green Sand Ridge, into the Loose Stream. The higher part of this face of the valley is visible from the routes crossing the North Downs ridge at Bluebell Hill and Detling, some 10 kms north.

2.11 The greater part of the land area of the parish is in agricultural use, mainly orchards with some mixed farming, horse pasture, woodland and some areas of uncultivated land. Smaller farmsteads and clusters of agricultural buildings can be found in outlying parish areas. The Loose Stream, with its steep fall, supported a large number of water mills in the past. Those buildings that remain have almost all been converted for residential use.

Land Ownership

2.12 Several areas of land in the valley have been acquired in order to protect them from future development and provide access for the public. Loose Amenities Association owns approximately 9 hectares to the west of the village which extends past Little Ivy into Tovil parish.

2.13 Loose Parish Council has acquired Brooks Field, in the centre of the historic village and is currently enhancing that land with the planting of a new community oak wood at the western end whilst restoring the rest of the land to a traditional meadow. It also owns the King George V Playing Field, the Village Green, allotments (in trust) and other small parcels of land. Loose Swiss Scouts own just over 17 hectares in the valley to the east of the village, part of which falls within Boughton Monchelsea parish. The land is leased and farmed by a local farmer and crossed by public footpaths.

2.14 The Boughton Monchelsea Heritage Trust (BMHT) has acquired about 5 hectares of land in Loose, to the east of the A229 Linton Road, bounded by Salts Place to the north, Salts Avenue to the south and Hubbards Lane to the east. This land was purchased in order to prevent development that would cause the coalescence of the built areas of Loose and Boughton Monchelsea.

Loose Valley Conservation Area & Article 4 Direction

2.15 Loose was one of the first villages in Kent to have a designated Conservation Area. This was confirmed in 1970 under the terms of the 1967 Civic Amenities Act and comprised the historic centre of the village. More recently the Conservation Area has been extended to include large areas of the Loose Valley and extends into the neighbouring parishes of Boughton Monchelsea and Tovil. It is now known as the Loose Valley Conservation Area.

2.16 In conservation areas, it is the protection of the quality and special interest of the neighbourhood or area as a whole that is intended, rather than specific buildings. For example, the layout of boundaries, roads, vistas and viewpoints, trees and green features, street furniture and surfaces, the characteristic building materials of the area, the mix of different uses, and the design of shop fronts may all be taken into account when deciding whether an area has a particular special architectural or historic interest.

2.17 There are additional planning controls over certain works carried out within the conservation area. For example, demolition within conservation areas requires consent. The designation does not preclude development from taking place, but does require that developments preserve or enhance the historic character of the area, for example by ensuring that new buildings are of a high quality design. Conservation area status also removes some permitted development rights that apply in undesignated areas.

2.18 An Article 4 Direction, made some years ago under the terms of the 1951 General Development Order, now incorporated into the General Permitted Development Order 2011, and subsequent amendments, covers some of the Conservation Area and extends into Tovil parish. Unlike the Conservation Area the Article 4 Direction does not extend east of the A229.

2.19 An Article 4 Direction removes from an area all permitted development rights. This means that all new buildings, changes and additions to buildings, fences, surface treatments and trees require the grant of planning permission. This covers all structures including sheds, greenhouses, conservatories and patios. However, the extent of the area is not considered sufficient. Outside the scope of this neighbourhood plan, Loose Parish Council will seek an extension of the direction.



Many of the properties in the Loose Conservation Area benefit from the Article 4 direction.

Maidstone Borough Local Plan, 2011 — 2031

2.20 The Maidstone Borough Local Plan was formally adopted at full council on 25th October 2017. The local plan includes the following policies relevant to Loose:

- SP17 Landscapes of Local Value
- DM3 Historic and Natural Environment
- SP18 The Historic Environment
- SP20 Affordable Housing

2.21 The plan also references the 2012 Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment, the 2015 Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study and the 2016 Green and Blue Infrastructure. Also relevant to the Loose Neighbourhood Plan is the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan and safeguarding areas and the 2008 Loose Road Character Area Assessment supplementary planning document.

3. Landscape Context

How can the neighbourhood plan support and protect the current balance of uses in Loose?

Landscape & People









3.1 Understanding the distinctive landscape character of Loose parish, and how the main services and facilities sit within that landscape, is critical to the delivery of the right type of development in the right places.

3.2 There is a variety of life and activity that occurs in Loose and the landscape is a working and living patchwork of spaces that are essentially about people. It helps the people who live, work and visit Loose to enjoy a better quality of life.


3.3 The Loose landscape comprises a variety of spaces that supports the life of the community. Figure 2 begins to explore the various landscape layers and the activities that occur across the parish. It is not intended to be precise or prescriptive but aims to give a strategic overview to inspire those involved in shaping the neighbourhood plan to think creatively about the different ways the landscape is used by Loose residents.

3.4 The names of the five neighbouring parishes, and Maidstone, are marked on the plan in white text.

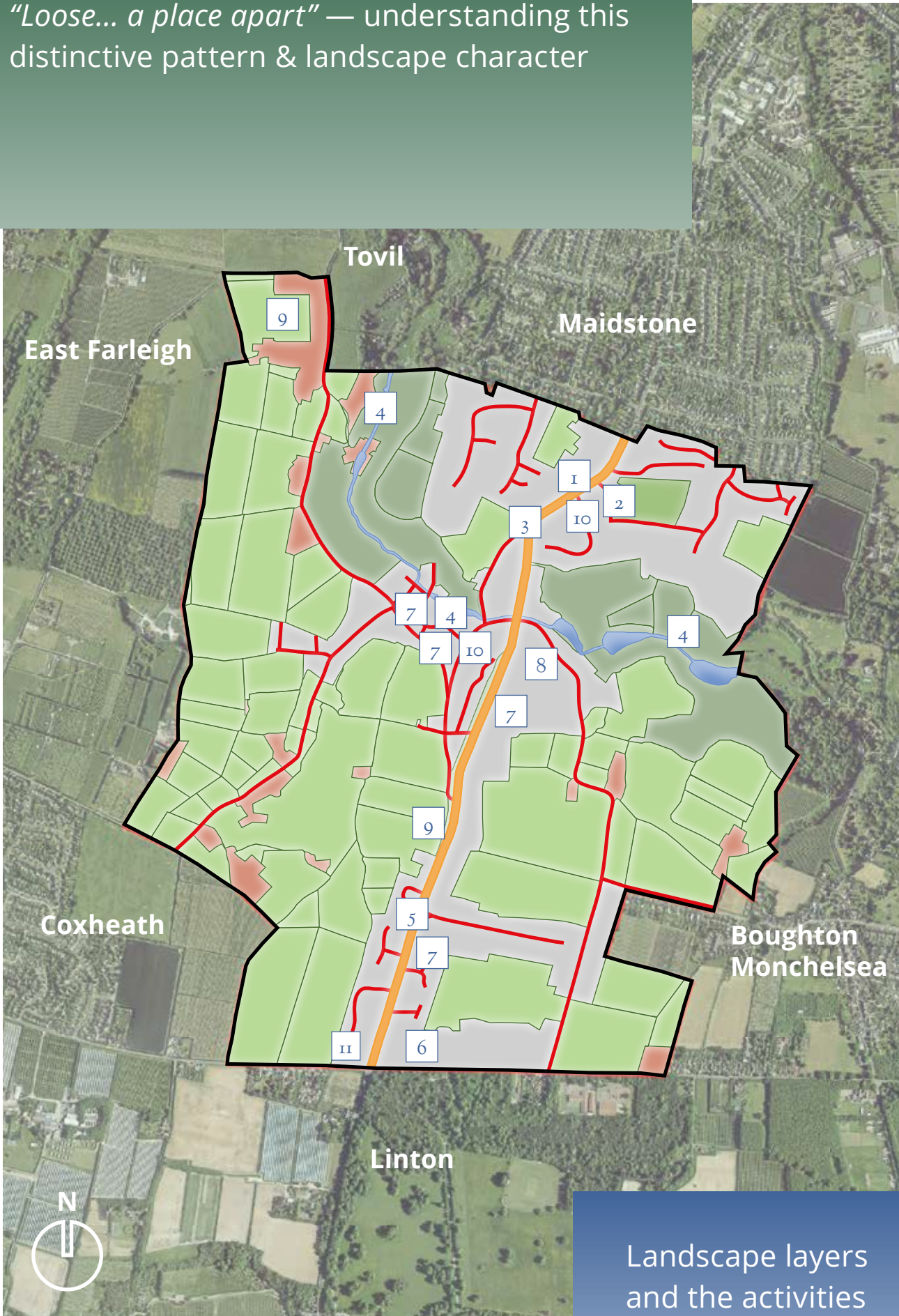
PLAN KEY

	Main built areas of the parish
	Outlying buildings & farms
	Streams & watercourses
	Loose Valley woodland belt
	Farmland, orchards & open landscape
	A229 main road
	Streets & lanes
	Neighbourhood area boundary

KEY FEATURES & FACILITIES

	Loose Primary School
	King George V Playing Field & Pavilion
	Village Green, Allotments, PO & Shops
	The Valley (Conservation Area) & Loose Stream
	Fish & chip shop
	Cornwallis Academy School
	Places of Worship
	Care Centre
	Small Business Units
	Public Houses
	Petrol Filling Station

"Loose... a place apart" — understanding this distinctive pattern & landscape character



Landscape layers and the activities across the parish

Figure 2

Landscape Character Components

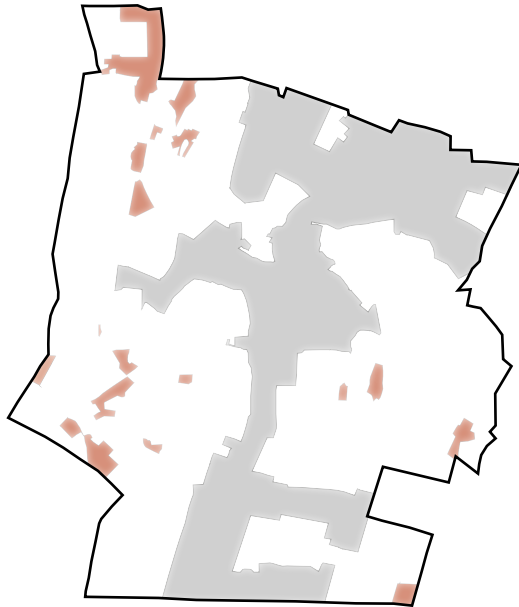


Figure 3

Built Environment

3.5 The built environment of the parish comprises small farmsteads and clusters of agricultural buildings (brown shaded areas) in outlying areas. Larger tracts of primarily residential development (grey shaded areas) can be found to the north of the parish and along a central spine around the A229 main road. The residential areas vary in character from low-rise bungalows to clusters of heritage buildings.

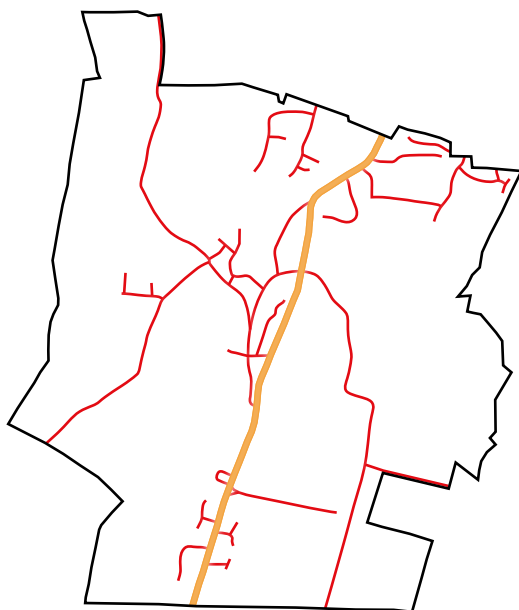


Figure 4

Movement Network

3.6 Running the full length of the parish in a north-south direction is the A229 (orange line). This is a main movement “spine” in and out of Maidstone from the south and carries a relatively high volume of traffic. Linking to this main road is a network of country lanes and residential streets (red lines) that provide access to the wider parish areas to the east and the west.

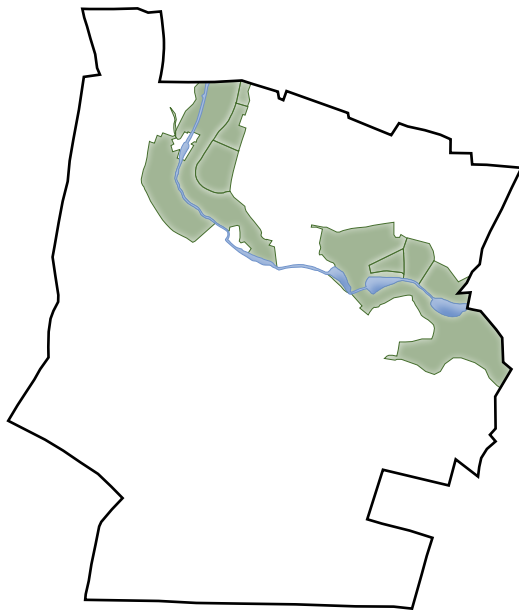


Figure 5

Loose Valley

3.7 The Loose Valley is narrow and steep-sided, centred along the Loose Stream and ponds (blue) forming a pleasant and secluded area stretching from Boughton Quarries to Tovil. The Loose Valley, along with other special landscape areas around the periphery of Maidstone town provide local distinctiveness which is unique to the borough's identity. Other wooded areas can be found alongside the A229 and to the south west of the parish.

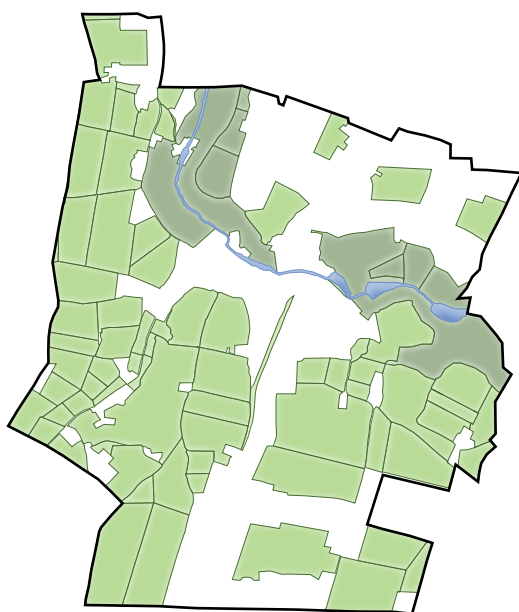


Figure 6

Productive Landscapes

3.8 Immediately surrounding the areas of built environment and beyond the special character of the Loose Valley is a patchwork of productive landscape areas (light green). This includes orchards, arable land, managed woodland and other areas of open countryside that provide the parish with its distinctive character and green appearance.

4. Planning Policy Framework

How will the three policy themes help guide the development of Loose into the future?



Loose Neighbourhood Plan Vision Statement

“Loose is a place apart, full of energetic and welcoming people. It has a celebrated history and a clear view of the future. It will continue to be a place with a distinct character and identity where new development sensitively integrates the needs of people into a special landscape”.

Policy Themes

4.1 The three policy themes that have been developed through the consultation work are as follows:

Access & Movement

4.2 The parish council, working with partners, will deliver a balanced mix of initiatives that will make moving around Loose parish a more pleasant, efficient and sustainable experience.

Landscape Protection

4.3 All landscape works and development should respect the distinctive landscape setting of Loose and not undermine the purpose, high quality and special distinctiveness of the different landscape characters that can be found across the parish.

Design Quality

4.4 All developments should be built to high design standards and something that improves and enhances the built environment of Loose for now and for future generations.

Shared Vision

4.5 “Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood” (para. 183 of the National Planning Policy Framework). Therefore, each stage of the Loose Neighbourhood Plan process to date has sought to extend the amount of common ground between local residents and businesses, narrowing down various options through a transparent and open process. At all stages, the neighbourhood planning process will allow room for dissent and minority views but the overall aim of the process is to build a broad-based consensus. This process has allowed a set of objectives for the neighbourhood plan to be developed with a supporting Vision Statement.

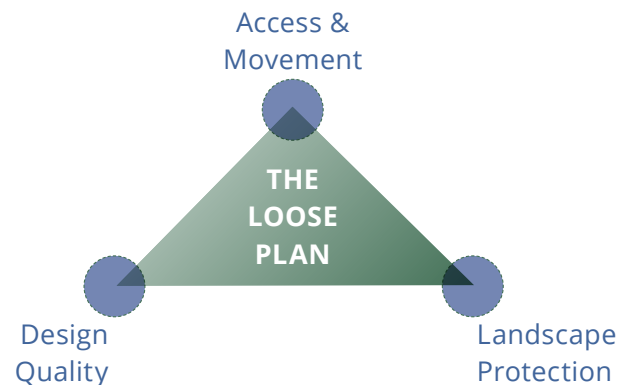


Figure 7

4.6 This diagram in Figure 7 shows how the three key themes contribute to the overall plan for Loose and demonstrates the mutually supportive quality to the three themes. Each policy theme (and the individual policies within them) has been tested against both the Vision Statement and the Neighbourhood Plan objectives to ensure that they are complementary and effective at delivering change and protection in the right ways.

Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

4.7 The objectives of the neighbourhood plan are to:

1 — Maintain and enhance the rural character of the built elements of Loose parish, its immediate settings and the wider landscape of the parish area.

2 — Coordinate all new development so that it contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and essential services for everybody who lives and works in Loose.

3 — Create a robust, yet flexible, access and movement network appropriate for all modes of travel for current and future populations.

4 — Use land and resources efficiently so that new developments have a reduced demand for energy and are carbon-neutral.

5 — Protect and enhance the natural and historic environment, the quality of the built environment and the wider countryside.

6 — Ensure inclusive design qualities through the use of appropriate materials and details that respond to the Loose context.

7 — Ensure that land made available for development will be developed in such a way as to improve people's quality of life, for both new and existing residents.

8 — Deliver the community infrastructure necessary to support Loose in the 21st Century.



The protection of the watercourses in Loose must be an integral part of all planning applications and permissions (Objective 5).



Protection of the built environment is a critical aspect of the plan (Objectives 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7).



Protection of the landscape setting of the village and parish is also important (Objectives 1, 5 and 6).

Background to the Neighbourhood Plan Objectives and Policies

4.8 The objectives and policies of the neighbourhood plan have been informed by the following themes and ideas raised during the consultation process. The background is explained here.

Built environment protection

4.9 The landscape protection offered by the Loose Conservation Area status and the Article 4 Direction has, to an extent, been diminished through a general unawareness of both measures, but particularly the Article 4 Direction, by parish residents.

4.10 Therefore, the neighbourhood plan includes a policy to lift the level of design quality expected in new developments across the parish, including in the Loose Conservation Area. See Policies DQ1 and DQ2.

Protection of long distance views

4.11 The protection of long distance views has been identified as an important factor in the public surveys and workshops held in connection with the plan. In order to protect long distance views, no new development should be permitted along the “valley rims” where it could be viewed from within the Loose Conservation Area or from the higher ground on opposite sides of the valley if it detracts from the view. See Policy LP1.

Natural environment protection

4.12 Across the Loose Valley the landscape is typified by the Loose Stream and the numerous small streams that flow into it from the southern side of the valley. All of the watercourses in the plan area are also wildlife habitats. There have been several large pollution incidents involving the main stream and some of the smaller streams. There have been several incidents of sewage overflows from the wastewater pumping station onto private land and into the Loose Stream. All planning applications should consider the management of rain water run-off from buildings and hard surfaces so that pollutants are not carried into the streams and where large volumes of water are involved the streams are not overwhelmed.

4.13 Not only is the stream important but so too is the need to protect the rest of the natural environment. Hedgerows, orchards, woodland, grassland, scrubland and meadows are all features that contribute to the attractive distinctiveness of Loose. They provide important flora and fauna habitat and movement corridors. Consideration needs to be given to the protection of these. The reduction in species such as the song thrush, bats, water vole and dormouse is evident. Planning applications should consider their impact on these areas and not compromise their well-being. See Policy LP4.

Tree planting projects

4.14 For many years now Loose has been noted for its trees and has on several occasions received regional awards and commendations for the way in which trees have been managed and protected in the parish. The yew tree in All Saints churchyard is considered to be over 1,500 years old and is of national significance. The importance of continuing this practice cannot be overstated in the overall management of the landscape across the whole of the parish.

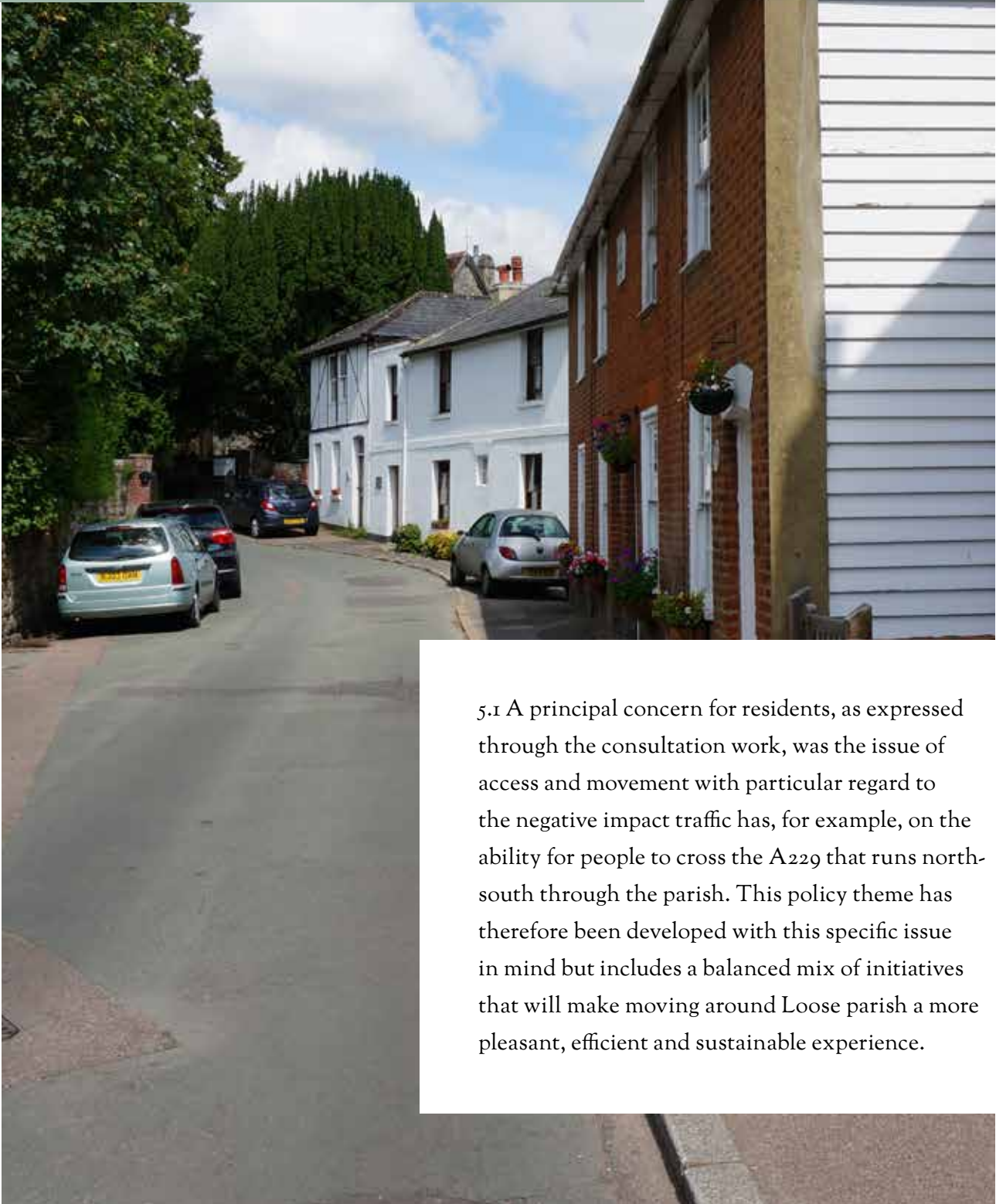
4.15 Trees are the most civil company. They provide shelter and protection from the extremes of weather and soften the hard edges of the built environment. Many of the responses to the neighbourhood plan survey and workshops cited trees and their protection as a key factor for consideration in the Loose Neighbourhood Plan and for many, along with the stream, typify the landscape of the parish of Loose.

4.16 In considering trees, the plan should not just think in terms of the open country and woodlands but also the trees within gardens that enhance both village and suburban areas providing shelter and privacy as well as the many diverse garden landscapes for which Loose is so well known.

4.17 Within the Loose Conservation Area any trees lost due to age, storm or other damage should be replaced with specimens of the same type or a type approved by the borough council. Planning applications across the parish should consider the impact of the change or development upon trees within the site or adjacent to it regardless of the type of application. Where the application includes new building whether it is an extension to an existing building, a single new build or a larger development it should include a landscaping scheme which takes into account the impact upon the amenity of neighbours as well as longer distance views. See Policy DQ2.

5. Access & Movement

Planning Policies



5.1 A principal concern for residents, as expressed through the consultation work, was the issue of access and movement with particular regard to the negative impact traffic has, for example, on the ability for people to cross the A229 that runs north-south through the parish. This policy theme has therefore been developed with this specific issue in mind but includes a balanced mix of initiatives that will make moving around Loose parish a more pleasant, efficient and sustainable experience.

Policy AM1

Improve the Pedestrian Environment

1) SEEK IMPROVEMENTS TO THE NETWORK OF FOOTPATHS & FOOTWAYS THROUGHOUT THE PARISH THAT ENSURE THEY ARE SAFE, CONVENIENT AND COMFORTABLE.

2) NEW PEDESTRIAN CROSSING FACILITIES WILL BE SUPPORTED ALONG THE A229 AT AGREED LOCATIONS TO ENABLE EASIER CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE EAST AND WEST OF THE PARISH.

3) FOOTWAY WIDENING AND RESURFACING WHERE NECESSARY WILL BE ENCOURAGED.

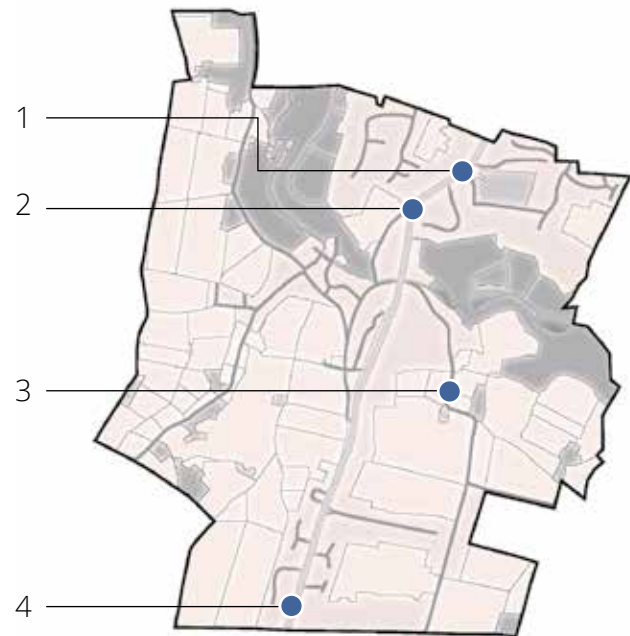


Figure 8 — This policy is to be applied at specific locations (1) the area adjacent to Loose primary school; (2) the village green; (3) country lanes and; (4) Cornwallis Academy and Linton crossroads.

Three locations for new pedestrian crossings have found favour with residents. These are:

Between Rosemount Close to No. 51 Linton Road; at the Loose Primary School, where a pelican or toucan crossing is required; and a dedicated pelican crossing at the Linton crossroads adjacent to Cornwallis Academy.

Policy Justification

5.2 The parish council, working with partners, will deliver a balanced mix of initiatives that will make moving around Loose parish a more pleasant, efficient and sustainable experience.

5.3 The present day layout of the roads, streets, lanes and track ways of the parish can be traced back to the movements of early Saxon settlers. Over the centuries, the parish has been shaped by the influence of the transport routes from north to south.

5.4 The need for a contemporary high quality access and movement strategy is at the heart of this policy theme along with a determination to create a more pleasant village centre with strong walking links to the outlying areas. Design and planning principles must inform this ambition and should be incorporated into every new development.

5.5 When considering the users of the streets and roads within Loose, the following hierarchy of needs should be observed so that a balanced and sustainable approach can be developed: Pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users, specialist service vehicles and other motor traffic. This movement hierarchy will help ensure that the correct priority is given to the preferred user during the policy formulation, planning, design, construction and management phases.

Some Key Projects & Actions Arising from this Policy Area

5.6 Some key projects and actions arising from this policy area are:

- Enhanced public realm projects at the village green, Old Loose Hill / A229 junction.
- Support for new cycling routes projects.
- Review of lower speed limits and new, dedicated pedestrian crossings along the A229.

5.7 There are further opportunities to enhance the landscape of Loose through public realm projects e.g. new benches, seats and useful street furniture (including more waste bins) similar to those implemented in the last few years around the parish with the assistance of ward councillors and the Loose Amenities Association, private individuals and Loose Parish Council.

5.8 Future projects could include work around the Village Green, along the A229 on the southern approach and around the Pickering Street/Leonard Gould Way area. These projects could be initiated by the parish council or other bodies in the area with funding provided from either public, charitable or local commercial sources.

Footways (Pavements)

5.9 The network of existing footways throughout Loose does not always allow for safe and convenient access. In many places they are too narrow to be used comfortably. There is also a need to address the perceived threat to pedestrian safety that results from narrow footways, the passage of HGVs and the associated issue of air pollution, especially along the A229.

5.10 To encourage more people to walk in Loose, the existing and future footways around the village need to be generous, well-surfaced, safe and well-connected. Some footways could be widened to make walking more comfortable.

Footpaths

5.11 Many residents value living close to some of the most attractive countryside in England. Opening up more land around the edges of Loose to create highly-valued recreational routes will be one way to ensure the new village edges have a sense of permanence and will reassure village residents that growth will not go unchecked.

5.12 The neighbourhood plan intends to support the maintenance of existing routes as a benefit to the Parish.

5.13 The neighbourhood plan will seek an appropriate level of signage in keeping with the rural nature of the area with natural surface materials that are robust and all-weather.

Cycle Routes

5.14 The creation of streets that are safe for cycling and walking will encourage healthy active lifestyles for all ages. In certain areas, segregated or dedicated cycling infrastructure may be required, for example, at key junctions.

5.15 These measures will help raise the level of utility cycling (e.g. riding to work, to the shops or to school). Good quality cycle infrastructure will give cyclists the space they need to ride safely on the roads and keep the pavement space for pedestrians. Facilities that are to be shared between pedestrians and cyclists must be avoided if at all possible within the built part of the village.

Off-Road Cycle Routes

5.16 Loose is surrounded by attractive open green spaces. The creation of off-street recreational cycling routes will enhance existing access and connections between the built-up parts of the village and the green spaces beyond. These routes need to be convenient, accessible, well-signed and enjoyable if they are to help encourage cycling as a recreational activity which in turn, may help raise levels of utility cycling.

5.17 Such off-road routes through the countryside can often be safely and successfully shared between walkers and cyclists. Cycle routes should blend in with the local landscape. Regular access to green open space has a significant positive impact upon an individual's mental health. Access to the countryside setting of Loose parish can be promoted by well-connected cycle routes.

5.18 The proposal for a shared pedestrian-cycle route at Kirkdale was met with considerable objection and alternative options are now being considered. There is an option for a potential route alongside the allotments going into Bray Gardens and Waldron Drive from Old Loose Hill. This is supported in principle by Loose Parish Council and negotiations are on-going with Kent County Council about how this route could be delivered.

5.19 It is feasible that the cycle route terminating at Old Drive could be extended eastwards along Lancet Lane to the rear entrance of the primary school in Waldron Drive. Although outside this neighbourhood plan area, the proposal is supported by the North Loose Residents Association with a made neighbourhood plan covering Lancet Lane.

5.20 There are three byways in the parish, currently open for walking, horse riding and cycling. These are Filmers Farm to Camp Field Farm; Filmers Farm to Atkins Hill and Linton Road to Salts Lane.

Better & More Frequent Pedestrian Crossings

5.21 The A229 carries a combination of through-traffic and local traffic. It is also a vital walking route between different neighbourhoods and village services, such as the schools and bus stops. Better and more frequent pedestrian crossings at specific points are required to provide safer and more convenient access between where people live and where people want to get to. In Loose, these locations with support are:

- Between Rosemount to No. 51 Linton Road;
- At the Loose Primary School, where a Pelican or Toucan crossing is required;
- A dedicated pelican crossing at the Linton crossroads adjacent to Cornwallis Academy. This could align the school entrance with the school crossing. The timing and sequence of the traffic lights could also be changed to give greater pedestrian priority.

Lower Speed Limits

5.22 There has been widespread support during the consultation phases for reduced speed limits along the A229 and other roads. In response to this, Loose Parish Council has agreed to set up a community “speed watch” group to monitor this route through the parish. Findings from this group will form the basis of recommendations to Kent County Council Highways. The speed monitoring will be taken between Linton crossroads and the viaduct, although monitoring of speed elsewhere on the A229 could be a later consideration.

Protection Of Country Lanes

5.23 The consultation work has identified that “rat-running” (i.e. vehicles using minor country lanes rather than the main road) is prevalent along Busbridge Road, Salts Lane, Church Street, Well Street and Highbanks.

5.24 The neighbourhood plan identified that these roads need to be protected, and that any further development along these routes should be resisted in order to maintain that protection longer term.

5.25 The designation of these routes as “Quiet Lanes” or similar may be a way to deter use by non-essential traffic. The designation could be accompanied by traffic-calming features and new signages, appropriate for a rural area.

Traffic-Calming & Car Parking

5.26 Areas around the village green, the north end of Northleigh Close, Leonard Gould Way, Well Street, and Loose village centre have been identified as having on-street parking problems. There are no easy answers to these parking issues. The compact form of Loose means that the narrow streets, with a positive village character, often do not have the room to accommodate many vehicles.

5.27 Neighbours, residents and visitors in these areas should act responsibly with courtesy to one another.



Parked cars can often block narrow pavements and obstruct sight lines.

Policy AM2

Land adjacent to the post office at Old Loose Hill and Loose Road junction — “The Village Green”

1) NEW PUBLIC REALM PROJECTS AT THE JUNCTION OF OLD LOOSE HILL AND THE A229 ON LAND AT AND NEAR THE VILLAGE GREEN WILL BE SUPPORTED SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

THAT THE DESIGNS AND REVISED LAYOUTS:

— PROVIDE A BETTER SETTING FOR THE VILLAGE GREEN

— PROVIDE A BETTER SENSE OF ARRIVAL

— HELP TO SLOW TRAFFIC

— FACILITATE THE TURNING OF LARGER VEHICLES LESS THAN 7.5T WEIGHT & BUSES

— PROVIDE CLEARER ACCESS TO OLD LOOSE HILL

— HELP PRESERVE THE WELL-BEING OF THE LOCAL SHOPS

Policy Justification

5.28 The neighbourhood plan supports a public realm project at the junction of Old Loose Hill and the A229 on land at and near the village green. The aims of this project will be several, as follows:

— To provide a better setting for the village green, one of the few publicly accessible small-scale green spaces in Loose;

— To provide a better sense of arrival and a “gateway” for those arriving in the parish from the north, helping to slow traffic and make the lower speed limit ambition more deliverable;

— Implement a revised traffic layout that better facilitates emergency vehicles and buses which could allow the return of a bus service to the village;

— Revisions to the layout and design of the area should be done with the express aim of helping to preserve the well-being of the local shops in the immediate area, with a more appropriate parking regime.

5.29 These measures are supported in principle by Loose Parish Council and negotiations are on-going with Kent County Council. A final package of agreed measures, supported by both Kent County Council and Loose Parish Council, may be promoted through the neighbourhood plan.

Access & Movement Issues



Crossing the A229 can be difficult. There is just one pedestrian crossing in the parish which is at the Linton cross roads and this is incorporated within the traffic light system which is less than satisfactory.



The village green area is often congested with cars and this can make some traffic movements difficult.



Pavements are narrow and in the absence of any dedicated cycle infrastructure, they are often used as safe routes to and from schools by some cyclists.



The drop-off and pick-up times at the primary school can add to driver delays along the A229.

6. Landscape Protection

Planning Policies



6.1 Loose parish has a very attractive landscape character, made even more special by the fact it sits right on the edge of the Maidstone urban area, a striking and interesting contrast.

6.2 The siting, scale and design of new housing and commercial development around urban edges can have an adverse impact on the adjacent landscape. This impact can be through a negative change in the character of views, a cumulative loss of landscape features and an erosion of character through use of standardised suburban housing layouts and designs.

6.3 The Loose Neighbourhood Plan requires that all new landscape works and development should respect the distinctive landscape setting of Loose and not undermine the purpose, high quality and special distinctiveness of the different landscape characters across the parish. They need to be enjoyed by future generations of residents and visitors alike.



Policy LP1

Views Across Village & Countryside

1) DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS SHOULD GIVE CONSIDERATION TO IDENTIFIED SHORT AND LONG-RANGE VIEWS ACROSS THE COUNTRYSIDE AND THE VILLAGE, AND WHERE APPROPRIATE SHOULD SEEK TO SAFEGUARD THESE VIEWS.

2) DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS SHOULD RESPOND TO GUIDANCE IN THE LOOSE ROAD CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (2008).

See supporting photos on pages 36 — 37 and plan in Figure 9, page 38.

Policy Justification

6.4 There is a strong relationship between the built elements of Loose parish and its wider landscape setting. At various points in and around the parish, there are clear lines of sight out to open countryside and back again from open countryside towards and across the village. This experience is enhanced through several elevated locations in the parish. This locally distinctive context provides a sense of identity and a particular character to Loose.

6.5 The neighbourhood plan process has made an assessment of the key views, explained their qualities and recorded them on the plan in Figure 9. This assessment process has helped to formulate a protection policy.

6.6 Applications for new development should demonstrate an understanding of this assessment and show how their proposals respond in an appropriate manner.

LP1 Views Across Village & Countryside



1. The long-distance view looking south from the allotments across the village towards the southern edge of the valley and parish boundary, predominantly orchards. From map ref. TQ75875229.



2. The open view over agricultural land, looking east from the path leading north east from Salts Avenue to Hubbards Lane. From map ref: TQ75985129.



3. The view looking south east, following the Loose valley, towards the village, from Busbridge Road near Pympes Court Farm. Predominantly Conservation Area. From map ref: TQ75435263.



4. Long distance view looking north across the orchards of the Loose Valley and allotments to the North Downs on the horizon. From the fruit farm packing station, approx. 400m due south of church. From map ref: TQ75555168



5. The view looking south over the village and Conservation Area from approx. 100m north of Kirkdale cottages on west side of footpath. From map ref: TQ75685233..



6. One of the views across the Loose Valley and Conservation Area into the village, from the east side of Busbridge Road. From map ref: TQ75365238 to TQ75545218.



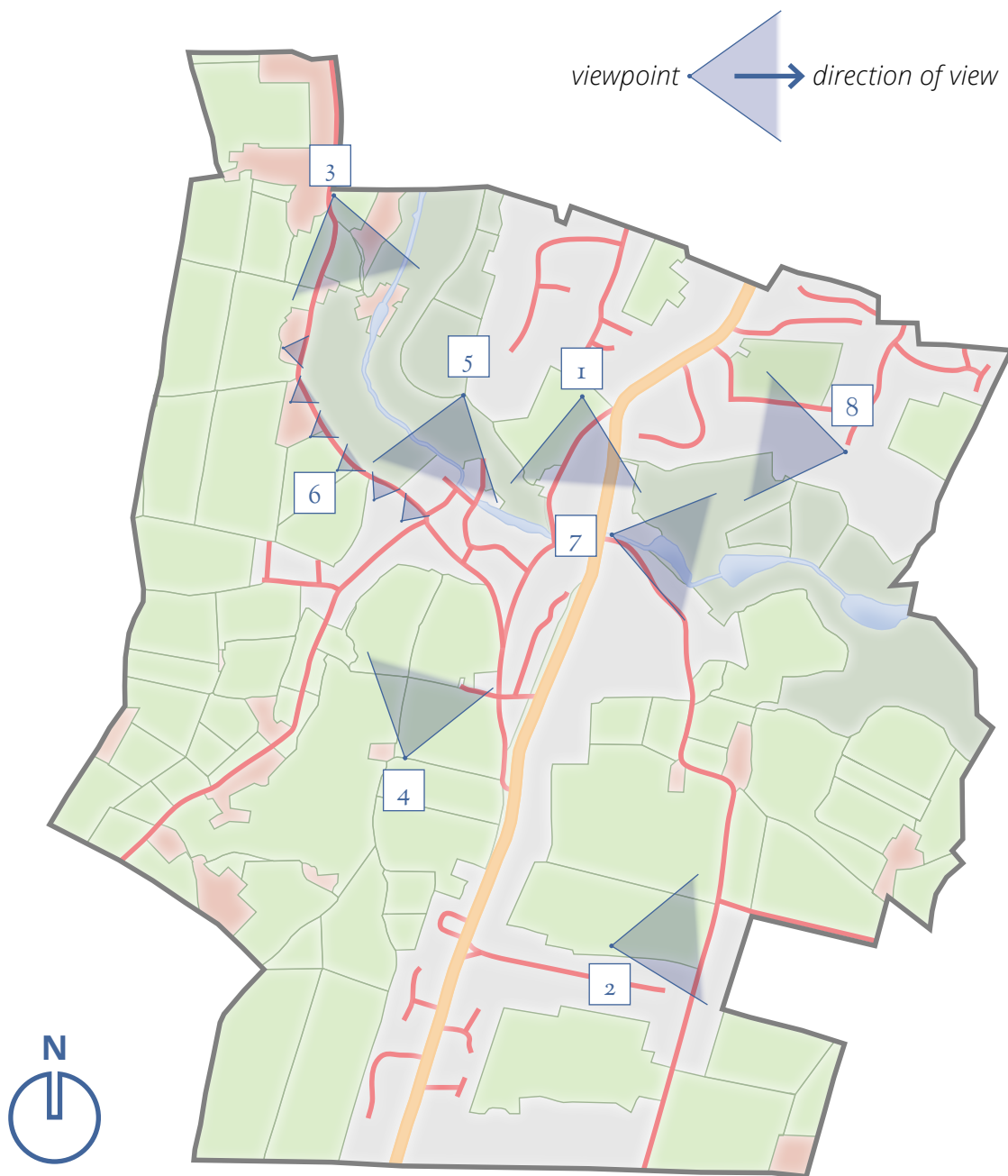
7. Views of the Loose Valley looking east through the Conservation Area, from the Loose Viaduct on the A229. From map ref: TQ75955207.



8. The view of open and working countryside in the Conservation Area, looking westwards from the Pickering Street (Old Lakenham) footpath to Boughton Woods. From map ref: TQ76395205.

Policy LP1 Key Views

Figure 9 — Eight key views to be protected



Policy LP2

Area of Local Landscape Value

1) DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS IN THE LOOSE VALLEY AREA OF LOCAL LANDSCAPE VALUE SHOULD HAVE PARTICULAR REGARD TO THE SCENIC QUALITY AND DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER OF THE AREA, AND SHOULD MITIGATE ANY IMPACTS.

2) DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS SHOULD RESPOND TO GUIDANCE IN THE LOOSE ROAD CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (2008).

Policy Justification

6.7 The Loose Valley performs a vital local function by demarcating particular distinctive features which are important to Maidstone specifically. The Loose Valley provides local distinctiveness which is unique to Maidstone's identity.

6.8 Protection will be given to the Loose Valley, a narrow and steep-sided valley centred on the Loose stream and mill ponds which forms a pleasant and secluded rural area stretching from Boughton Quarries to Tovil.

6.9 This neighbourhood plan policy seeks landscape protection as part of other planning considerations. This specific policy will therefore become an important planning mechanism to protect the wider parish from intrusive development proposals.

Policy LP3

Design of Development in the Countryside

1) DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WITHIN THE PARISH BOUNDARY AND OUTSIDE THE BUILT AREAS OF LOOSE, AS ILLUSTRATED IN FIGURE 10, WILL HAVE REGARD TO THE SPECIFIC LANDSCAPE DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR THIS AREA SET OUT IN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN. IN PARTICULAR, NEW DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS AND SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE SHOULD:

- a) PROVIDE FOR HIGH QUALITY DESIGN
- b) BE LOCATED TO AVOID THE LOSS OF IMPORTANT VIEWS
- c) SEEK TO RETAIN KEY LANDSCAPE FEATURES
- d) RESPECT THE CHARACTER AND DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE LOCALITY

e) ENSURE THAT SITE ENTRANCES AND ACCESS RESPECT AND INCORPORATE LANDSCAPE FEATURES, WHERE APPROPRIATE

f) PROTECT AND ENHANCE BIODIVERSITY FEATURES.

2) DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WITHIN THE BUILT AREAS OF LOOSE, AS ILLUSTRATED ON FIGURE 10, WILL HAVE REGARD TO THE SPECIFIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR THIS AREA SET OUT IN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AND IN THE LOOSE ROAD CHARACTER AREA ASSESSMENT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT. IN PARTICULAR, NEW DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS AND SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE SHOULD:

- a) PROVIDE FOR HIGH QUALITY DESIGN

b) ENSURE NEW DEVELOPMENT RESPECTS AND COMPLEMENTS THE RURAL SETTLEMENT FORM, PATTERN, CHARACTER AND ITS LANDSCAPE SETTING

c) MAINTAIN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE HISTORIC SETTLEMENT CORE AND THE LANDSCAPE SETTING THROUGH THE PROTECTION OF VIEWS AND VISTAS

d) USE APPROPRIATE LOCAL MATERIALS

e) SEEK TO RETAIN EXISTING LANDSCAPE FEATURES

f) PROTECT AND ENHANCE ON-SITE BIODIVERSITY FEATURES.

3) PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT WILL BE REQUIRED TO RETAIN THE CHARACTER AND SETTING OF THE AREA AND SHOULD SEEK TO AVOID COALESCENCE WITH THE SETTLEMENTS OF COXHEATH, BOUGHTON MONCHELSEA, TOVIL, EAST FARLEIGH AND LINTON.

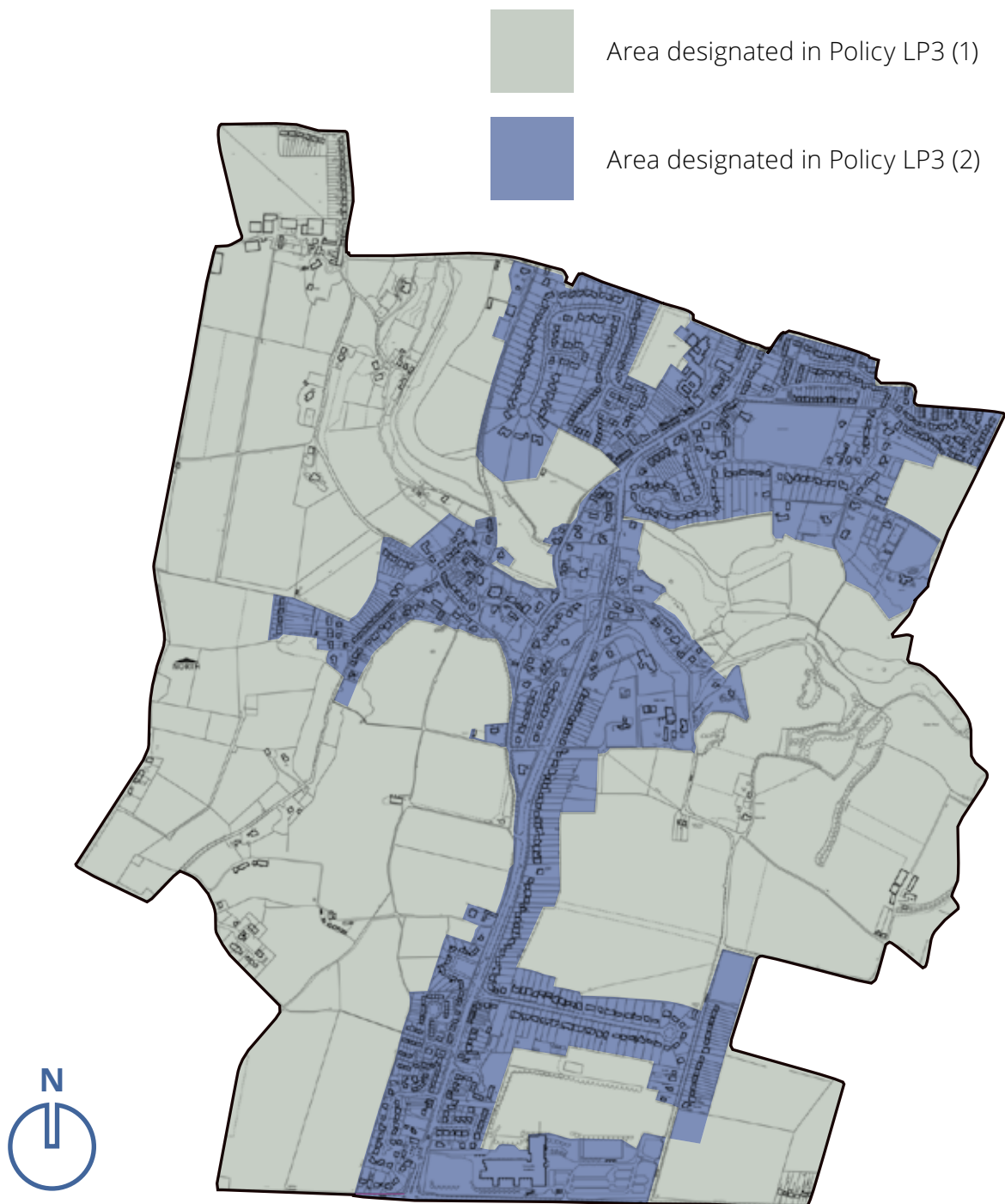
Policy Justification

6.10 Landscape is not a subject which stands alone. It can be the integrating framework for the parish and its setting, within which everything else interacts: the people, the buildings, the wildlife, the water courses and so on. Therefore ensuring the landscape framework is properly considered in relation to all new and existing developments is important as the implications can be far-reaching.

6.11 Good development can add to the character of the village and can also fund and deliver many benefits for the community. Carried out without proper care and consideration it can erode landscape character and local distinctiveness. In order to achieve the aspirations of this neighbourhood plan, these landscape policies need to inform development. Without this, local character and distinctiveness may not be retained and enhanced as it should be.

Policy LP3 Design of Development in the Countryside

Figure 10 — Plan in support of Policy LP3



Landscape design principles for development outside the built areas of Loose

in support of Policy LP3 (1)

6.12 Any new buildings and infrastructure within the parish boundary and outside the built up areas of Loose need to be located to avoid loss of important views towards features such as church towers or the wider landscape, as well as avoiding intrusion onto sensitive ridge lines, prominent slopes and damage to distinctive landscape settings.

6.13 New development should seek to retain key landscape features on development sites, such as woodland, shaws (narrow belts of woodland), hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds as a basis for the new landscape structure and setting of the site.

6.14 Development should avoid regimented buildings on the settlement edge for new developments.

6.15 Designs should integrate new development with local character, using open space and planting to provide a visual link to the countryside and an attractive backdrop to development.

6.16 Secure and manage native woodland, shaw, hedgerow and tree planting to integrate and/or screen new and existing developments.

6.17 Consider massing, form, height and colour, texture of buildings and structures, taking account of local distinctiveness and characteristics through the use of locally sympathetic materials. In the case of Loose, this will include ragstone, red brick, tile hanging and weatherboarding.

6.18 Coordinate building colour to secure a complementary effect between buildings and the surrounding landscape (e.g. use of matt neutral colours to minimise reflectivity).

6.19 Ensure that site entrances and approaches are designed to fit within the landscape, and use discrete signage.

6.20 Consider the need for lighting and where essential, seek to minimise its impact in the landscape through choice of light source and control of light spillage.

6.21 Consider the need for fencing. Where security fencing is required use wooden posts and galvanised wire and screen with thorny hedges of native plants.

6.22 Consider the impact of development on the Public Rights of Way network.

6.23 Sufficient space is to be included within site layouts to meet obligations linked to ecological requirements, such as the retention of mature hedgerows and trees and the creation of wetland habitats, linked to a SuDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage System) implementation plan.

Landscape design principles for development within the built areas of Loose

in support of Policy LP3 (2)

6.24 Recent development in rural areas has not always reflected the character and form of the host settlement. Furthermore, without respect for the relationship with the surrounding landscape, such developments can “suburbanise” the character of Loose.

6.25 Meanwhile, choice of materials does not always reflect local distinctiveness, often using standardised bricks and tiles. To avoid such situations in the future, all new developments in Loose should:

6.26 Ensure new development respects and complements the rural settlement form, pattern, character and its landscape setting, reinforcing local distinctiveness.

6.27 Conserve sensitive parts of settlement settings.

6.28 Maintain a direct relationship between the old settlement core and the surrounding landscape, allowing views in and out.

6.29 Use native woodland, shaw, hedgerow planting as appropriate to local character and open space to integrate new development. Use advance planting of native local trees and shrubs, where appropriate.

6.30 Avoid the introduction of features such as close board fencing, suburban style walls and fast growing conifers, particularly on the boundaries with rural lanes or with the wider landscape.

6.31 Use appropriate local materials. In the case of Loose, this will include ragstone, red brick, tile hanging, weatherboarding and peg tiles.

6.32 Seek to minimise the impact of new residential accesses by retaining existing hedgerows or traditional walls where possible.

6.33 Use new native hedge species and sympathetic grass mix verges where new sight lines are necessary. Where possible, use local provenance wildflower and grass-seed mixes.

6.34 Avoid the introduction of urban bollards, concrete block paving, concrete or plastic kerbs and highly coloured signage.

6.35 Use local stone on kerbs and surface dressings to complement local materials for carriageways and pavements.

6.36 Consider the need for lighting and minimise its impact.

6.37 Sufficient space is to be included within site layouts to meet obligations linked to ecological requirements, such as the retention of mature hedgerows and trees and the creation of wetland habitats, linked to a SuDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage System) implementation plan.

Policy LP4

Natural Environment in Loose

1) DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS SHOULD SEEK TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ACROSS THE PARISH, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE LOOSE VALLEY AND LAND THAT SURROUNDS IT.

2) PLANNING APPLICATIONS FOR LARGE* DEVELOPMENT SHOULD INCLUDE A DESK-TOP AND SITE-BASED ECOLOGICAL AND FLOOD SURVEY TO INFORM THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS.

3) DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS OF ALL SCALES SHOULD MAKE PROVISION FOR HABITAT AND CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENTS, AS PART OF THE DESIGNS.

** For residential, more than 10 dwellings or the site area for residential development is between 0.5 hectares and 4 hectares and for commercial development, more than 1,000 sq.m or the site area is between 1 hectare and 2 hectares.*

Policy Justification

6.38 The Loose Valley and the areas surrounding it support a broad diversity in both flora and fauna, including many species regarded as under threat. Numbers have dropped dramatically in recent years for the song thrush, turtle dove, grey wagtail and spotted flycatcher. In order to ensure that this diversity is maintained and that rare and threatened species are encouraged to thrive, biodiversity must be given a high priority when planning new developments and determining planning applications. This policy is applicable across the parish, not just to the areas of open countryside or agriculture, but in the built areas as well.

6.39 As well as the woods, meadows and fields across the parish, gardens and transport routes (e.g. roads, footpaths, tracks and watercourses) also provide important migratory routes for small mammals as well as nesting and feeding habitats for birds, from wrens to buzzards, and increasingly red kites, and various waterfowl. The neighbourhood plan area also includes a wide range of habitats supporting many species of fauna and varied ecosystems, some of which are now regarded as rare or endangered.

6.40 Plans for large-scale development should include a comprehensive biodiversity survey, having regard not only to the immediate location but also the effect the development may have on the Loose Stream and migratory routes. The removal of trees or hedgerows should be avoided and, if necessary, the plans should be adapted to ensure their retention. Small-scale development plans should also make provision for “mini-habitats” such as nesting boxes, swift bricks, bat boxes and bug hotels together with safe road crossings on identified migratory routes.

Policy LP5

Designated Local Green Spaces

TO PRESERVE, PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE LOCAL CHARACTER AND SETTING, THE FOLLOWING GREEN SPACES ARE TO BE DESIGNATED AS LOCAL GREEN SPACES AND BE AFFORDED PROTECTION:

1. King George V Playing Field
2. Brooks Field
3. Village Green
4. Allotments
5. Green verges on the western side of A229, from the viaduct to just south of Herts Crescent
6. Field to the rear of Herts Crescent and McAlpine Close
7. Green triangle at western end of Salts Avenue
8. Green verges at western end of Copper Tree Court
9. Junction of Leonard Gould Way and Pickering Street
10. Coppiced slope on southern side of Salts Lane
11. Herts Crescent Green
12. North verge of Holmesdale Close

Policy Justification

6.41 Good planning and design requires an integration of the landscape features with the built form. A local green network of landscape infrastructure has been identified and this will be protected and enhanced through the provisions of this policy.

6.42 Local green space designation is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities.

6.43 In Loose, the spaces to be protected are considered important through a combination of being beautiful, acting as a green edge, having historic qualities, being of recreational value or providing a tranquil space or being a wildlife habitat. These designations will not only continue to provide the village with its rural character and identity but will also provide recreational opportunities for residents and support biodiversity. Blue infrastructure, in the form of ponds, lakes and watercourses has been integrated into this network.

6.44 The neighbourhood plan has identified on a map green areas for special protection — see page 47. The designation of these spaces is consistent with local planning for sustainable development in the area. Further opportunities for pocket parks, street trees and enhanced landscape planting should also be explored and offered as part of all development proposals across the parish.

6.45 It should be noted that all landowners, including MBC and KCC, were individually consulted over the designation of their landholdings as local green spaces.

Designated Local Green Spaces *with the reasons for designation*

1. King George V Playing Field

G R T

2. Brooks Field

B G R T

3. Village Green

B H T

4. Allotments

G R T

5. Green verges on the western side of A229, from the viaduct to south of Herts Crescent

B G T

6. Field to the rear of Herts Crescent and McAlpine Close

B G R T

7. Green triangle at western end of Salts Avenue

B T

8. Green verges at western end of Copper Tree Court

G T

9. Junction of Leonard Gould Way and Pickering Street

B G T R

10. Coppiced slope on southern side of Salts Lane

B G T

11. Herts Crescent Green

G R T

12. North verge of Holmesdale Close

G T

See supporting photos on pages 49 — 51 and plan in Figure 11, page 48.

KEY TO LOCAL GREEN SPACE TYPOLOGIES

B

Beauty

G

Green Edge

H

Historic Qualities

R

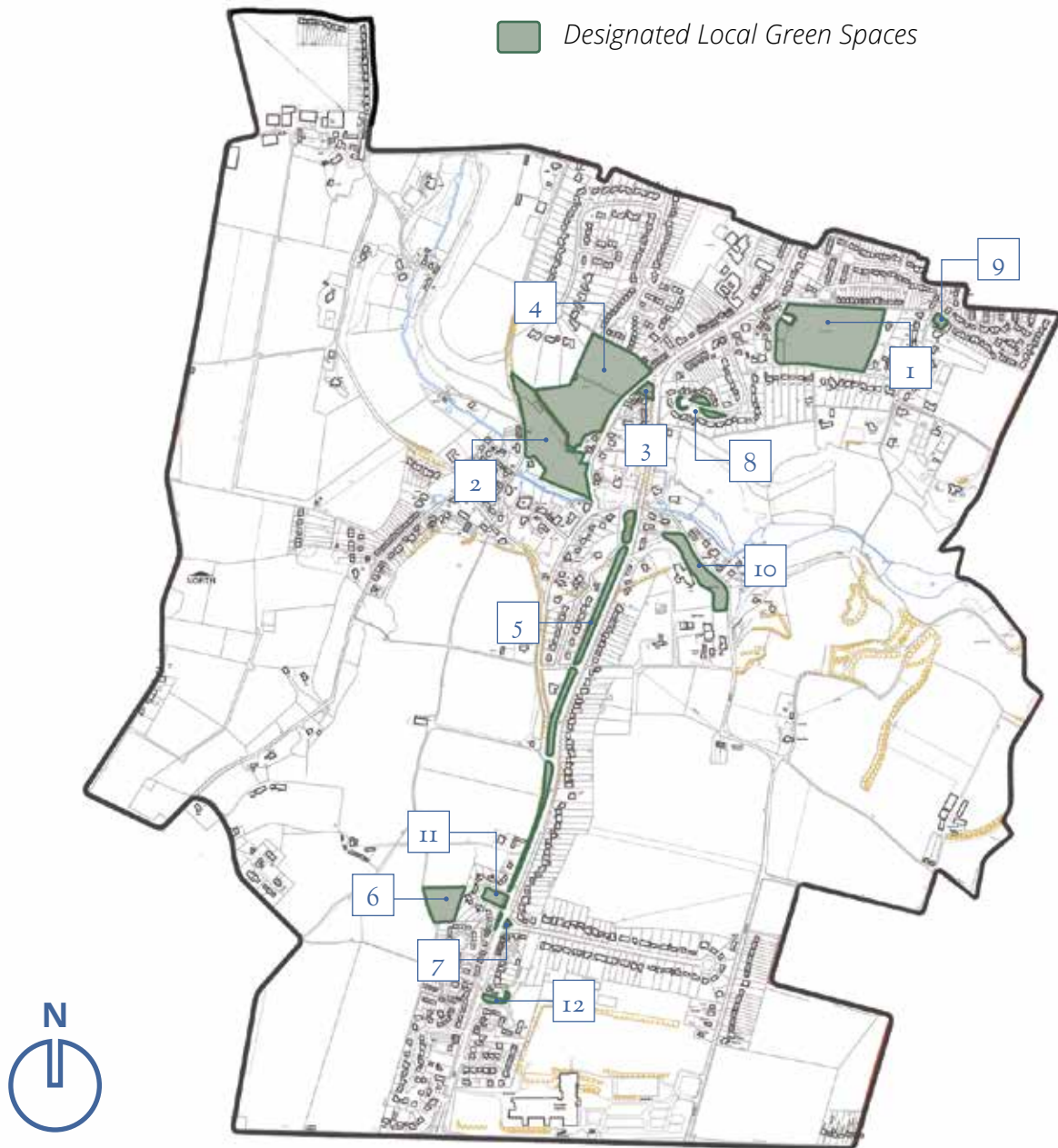
Recreational

T

Tranquillity & Wildlife Habitat

Policy LP5 Designated Local Green Spaces

Figure 11 — Designated Local Green Spaces





1. King George V Playing Field, viewed from the south west corner.



2. Part of Brooks Field, viewed from the south east corner.



3. Village Green, viewed from south west corner.



4. The allotments, viewed from northern boundary.



5. A229 verge, looking north from the mid-point of the space.



6. Field to rear of Herts Crescent, viewed from south east corner.



7. Salts Avenue triangle, viewed from the east.



8. Part of Copper Tree Court, viewed from western end.



9. Leonard Gould Way and Pickering Street, viewed from the north.



10. Typical part of a coppiced slope, Salts Lane.



11. Herts Crescent, viewed from south east corner.



12. Part of Holmesdale Close, viewed from the west.

7. Design Quality

Planning Policies



7.1 Any new housing development must be shaped and influenced by the traditional character and style of the parish. The Loose Neighbourhood Plan requires all new developments to reference the local context and demonstrate the use of high quality materials and styles appropriate to the place. For example, any small-scale in-fill and extensions to existing properties and developments adjacent to the built areas of Loose must be sensitive to the rural and more historic context, by reflecting the character of housing in proximity to countryside.

7.2 The aim for all new developments must be for them to leave a positive architectural legacy, to be sensitive to their local context and environment and add to the positive character of the Loose parish.



Policy DQ1

Design Quality

1) THE DESIGN, FORM AND DETAIL OF DEVELOPMENTS SHOULD BE PRINCIPALLY INFORMED BY THE TRADITIONAL FORM, LAYOUT, CHARACTER AND STYLE OF THE PARISH'S VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE. THIS WILL BE APPLICABLE TO NEW BUILD HOMES, COMMERCIAL AND EMPLOYMENT USE BUILDINGS AND TO ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING PROPERTIES.

2) CAREFUL INNOVATION IN DESIGN OR THOUGHTFUL MODERN OR CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE WILL NOT BE PRECLUDED. SUCH DESIGNS ARE ENCOURAGED, PROVIDED THEY ARE SYMPATHETIC TO THE SCALE AND CHARACTER OF LOOSE.

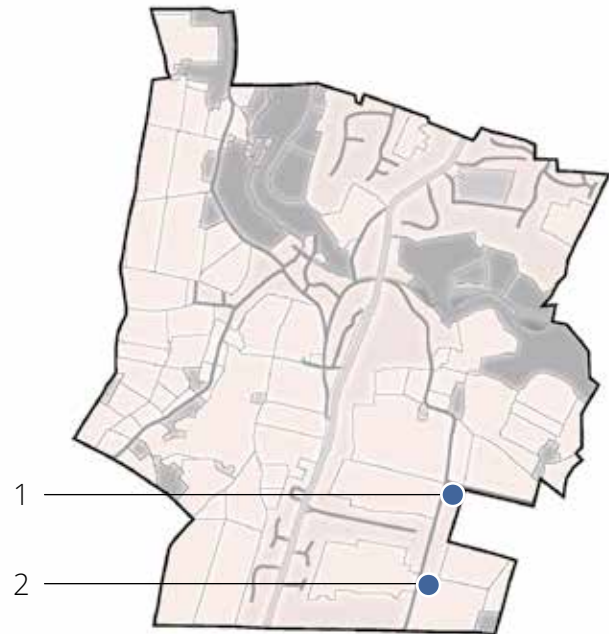


Figure 12 — This policy on good design will apply across the whole parish as well as having specific application on two sites allocated in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan, Adopted 25th October 2017:

1 — Approx. 20 dwellings at Hubbards Lane and Haste Hill Road, Loose. This is Policy H1 (51) in the adopted MBC Local Plan.

2 — Approx. 8 dwellings at Hubbards Lane south. This is Policy H1 (55) in the adopted MBC Local Plan.

Policy Justification

7.3 Loose needs to promote good architecture through better definition of what is considered to be good quality design. The transitional spaces between private and public space are critical and parameters need to be set to guide development. There should be a consideration of the massing of buildings, with detailed design from the street and eye level upwards to the skyline. Local designers and construction companies should combine with local labour and material supplies. This combination can provide positive ecological and economic impacts and help the local community to have a greater say on the future of the village. Energy efficiencies and alternative sources of power should be introduced at the earliest design stage. It is important for new developments to reflect the historic and unique values that have contributed to Loose's character and identity whilst still looking to the future through modern designs.

Local character

7.4 Any new housing development must be shaped and influenced by the traditional character and style of the village. The Loose Neighbourhood Plan requires all new developments to reference the local context and demonstrate the use of high quality materials and styles appropriate to the place. For example, any small-scale in-fill and extensions to existing properties and developments that may come forward within the built environment area need to respect the local and historic context, by reflecting the character of housing in the immediate proximity. Small clusters of new housing may have their own distinctive characters, to add to the overall variety and mix of Loose.

Consultation response

7.5 Through the consultation, the residents of Loose are generally agreed that they wish to see any new development in their village to be of a high design standard. They are also keen to see new developments improve their environment rather than downgrade it. They are proud of the local built environment and want to protect and enhance this legacy into the future.

Leaving a legacy

7.6 The aim for all new developments must be for them to leave a positive architectural legacy, to be sensitive to their local context and environment and add to the positive character of Loose. This policy will not exclude innovation or modern and contemporary architecture. Such designs are encouraged across the parish on individual sites as exemplar projects.

7.7 Where appropriate, architects are encouraged to create new designs that reflect both the local context and the technology and materials of the era within which they will be built.

Internal space standards

7.8 The size of new homes often falls short of existing space standards. The now defunct "Parker-Morris" space standards created more spacious buildings than those often being built today. All new developments are therefore to have space standards in accordance with the DCLG Technical Housing Standards. Housing development should also consider the storage and parking of bicycles.

Homes for modern living

7.9 The Loose Neighbourhood Plan will require all future housing development to support modern lifestyles through innovative design. These will include reducing energy costs through meeting high design standards as well as internal space standards and layouts that will encourage working from home.

7.10 Design details, such as the ability to receive parcels securely when not at home, meter reading, storage of several bicycles, flexible use of garage and garden spaces and the effective storage of waste and recycling bins must all be considered. All housing should seek to meet “Lifetime Homes” standards to ensure properties are sustainable and can be easily adapted to meet the needs of a changing population. The development of bungalows must also be considered.

7.11 All housing designs must promote efficient use of water, electricity and energy. The introduction of on-site generation technology, smart meters and other measures to reduce energy consumption should be considered across all housing sites.

7.12 The use of locally-sourced and recycled materials for use in construction should also be considered. Consideration should also be given to self-finish and/or self-build homes, as well as innovative hybrid housing that can respond to modern lifestyles.

Investment in community facilities

7.13 Loose currently has no dedicated community hall suitable for use by the wider population of the parish. The pavilion at the King George V playing field has provided sterling service over recent years but is now considered too small for many events and is hampered by the lack of smaller rooms to run events in parallel. A dedicated parish council office is badly needed. It is no longer appropriate for the parish office to be run from a private house and an extended building here could incorporate a dedicated operational space.

7.14 The majority feeling amongst residents through the consultation was that an investment in this location through an expansion of the existing building will be better than trying to secure a new site elsewhere in the parish. Furthermore, this site is probably the only one where publicly owned land is available for a project of this size and type.

7.15 The Loose Neighbourhood Plan has therefore identified a project for a new community hub facility at the King George V playing field. This will be supported subject to the following criteria: the provision of additional meeting spaces, including multiple rooms of different sizes; the inclusion of a dedicated parish office; and the use of high quality materials and external landscape works. The scale and design of this community hub will be subject to consultation.

Loose Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide

DESIGN CHECK-LIST

7.16 The following design topics should be addressed through a Design & Access Statement (DAS) by any applicant seeking planning permission for development or redevelopment in the neighbourhood plan area:

Amenity

7.17 Green spaces of appropriate scale and quality within new developments will be encouraged. All new houses to have private amenity space and/or gardens, at the front, back or side of the property, as appropriate.

Construction

7.18 The build quality of new developments, and the materials selected as part of the construction process, should ensure a high standard of appearance over time. Construction techniques and materials should prevent a rapid deterioration that can lead to buildings with an unsightly or neglected appearance. Building maintenance should be cost-effective and easy to administer.

Density

7.19 The density of new development should be in character with the local surrounding area, respect the character of the area and be designed to give an impression of spaciousness with opportunity for green landscape between buildings.

Discretion

7.20 Car parking should be discreet, with a proper provision of off-road parking as appropriate. On-road parking needs to be accommodated carefully to ensure that footways are not blocked or narrowed.

Domestic

7.21 The scale of new dwellings to be of a small or domestic scale suitable for the Loose local context. This is especially true within the existing built areas.

Evolution

7.22 Loose is to evolve gradually and not to experience rapid large-scale development. All development proposals are required to demonstrate how they will contribute to this positive evolution.

Extension

7.23 House extensions are to be sympathetic with the style of the host house and use similar materials and fenestration. Modern style extensions to traditional houses will be resisted.

Integration

7.24 New buildings should be well-integrated into the site and become part of a unified and interrelated composition, both with other buildings on site and with existing buildings adjacent to the site.

Layout

7.25 New developments should incorporate access routes and footpaths within the layout that reflect the historic character of Loose.

Lighting

7.26 Consideration should be given to the need for lighting, and where it is deemed essential, efforts should be made to seek to minimise its impact in the landscape through choice of light source and control of light spillage. Lighting should only be installed in areas of need. Areas adjacent to open spaces should be left unlit to avoid light pollution.

Locality

7.27 New buildings are to use local construction materials and techniques and reflect local building traditions. Materials should be obtained from local sustainable sources.

Resource Efficiency

7.28 Measures to help conserve water and energy in new buildings will be encouraged. The reuse and recycling of building materials will be encouraged, as will the use of locally sourced timber in construction.

Security

7.29 All developments and improvements in Loose parish should be designed to ensure that safety and security are built in. Designs should ensure people feel safe during hours of darkness through unobtrusive path lighting and active frontages (i.e. doors and windows facing onto the street) and safe, permeable routes where appropriate.

Ecology

7.30 New development should seek for ecological enhancement to the immediate area, such as provision for birds and bats to be incorporated into new buildings.

Tradition

7.31 Styles and materials that relate to those found in the more historic parts of the locality will be encouraged.

Gateway

7.32 Development on gateway sites that fail to take advantage of opportunities to improve the entrance points into Loose will be resisted.

Skyline

7.33 Developments should maintain and enhance the character views out to open countryside.

Built Environment Design Issues



Short rows of linked houses and the use of timber cladding is a design approach that will be supported.



On-site energy generation is an issue that must be considered as part of the design quality assessment of any proposal.



Use of ragstone on boundary treatments creates a robust and distinctive Loose identity.



This building has been successfully enlarged, with the new build wing blended effectively with the host property. A good example of how older buildings in Loose can be converted for modern use.

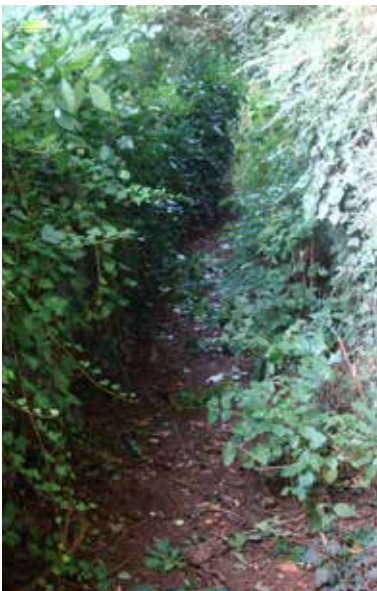
Landscape Design Issues



The landscape around Loose is rich agricultural land with a long history of fruit production, including cherries and apples. The neighbourhood plan wishes to see this productive quality maintained and enhanced.



The topography of Loose creates a higher plateau on the east of the parish with elevated views out towards open countryside.



Many footpaths are narrow and can feel overgrown at certain times of the year.



Sites within the parish afford residents and visitors long distance views out to open countryside and beyond the parish boundary.

Policy DQ2

Protection & Enhancement of the Loose Conservation Area

1) NEW DEVELOPMENT OR ALTERATION TO AN EXISTING STRUCTURE WITHIN THE LOOSE CONSERVATION AREA WILL BE REQUIRED IN ITS DESIGN, SCALE AND MATERIALS TO PRESERVE OR ENHANCE THE SETTING OF THE AREA AND THE HISTORIC CHARACTER OF LOOSE AND TO HAVE REGARD TO THE GUIDANCE CONTAINED WITHIN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN.

2) WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA ANY TREES LOST DUE TO AGE, STORM OR OTHER DAMAGE SHOULD BE REPLACED WITH SPECIMENS OF THE SAME TYPE OR A TYPE APPROVED BY THE BOROUGH COUNCIL.

Policy Justification

7.34 The Loose Valley Conservation Area (LVCA) was established in 1970 and seeks to protect and enhance a defined area of the parish due to its heritage value. While this designation affords the area a high degree of statutory protection, key points that the neighbourhood plan wishes to emphasis include:

7.35 Within the LVCA any trees lost due to age, storm or other damage should be replaced with specimens of the same type or a type approved by the borough council. Planning applications across the parish should consider the impact of the change or development upon trees within the site or adjacent to it regardless of the type of application.

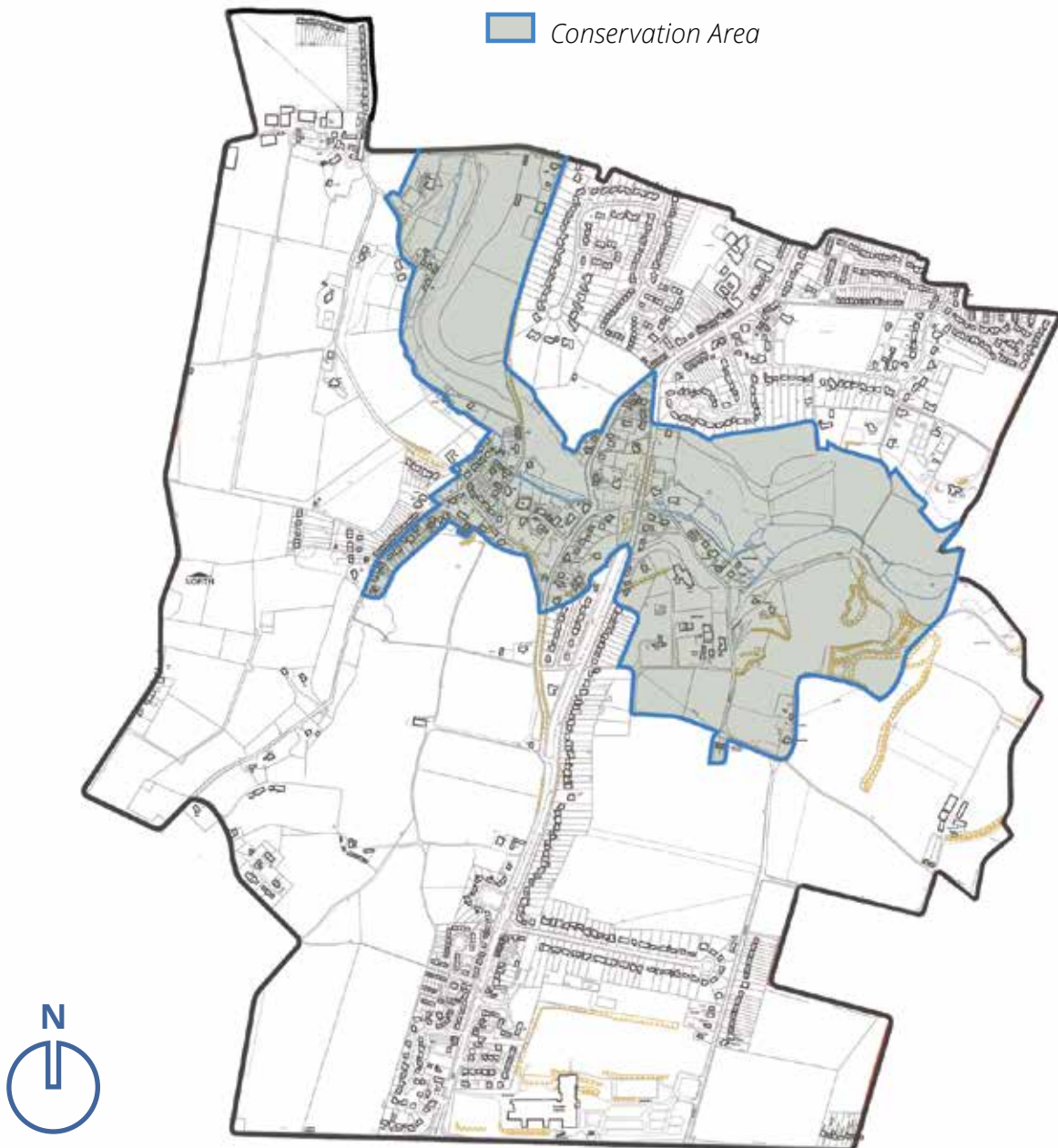
7.36 Where the application includes multiple new buildings, it should include an appropriate landscaping scheme which takes into account the impact upon the amenity of neighbours as well as longer distance views.

Future conservation projects

7.37 Loose already benefits from both the Conservation Area and an Article 4 direction that removes certain permitted development rights for the betterment of the built environment. However, the extent of this power is not considered wide enough. Loose Parish Council will seek an extension of the Article 4 direction area. An associated project will be to create a Loose Valley Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan, currently absent from the local planning framework.

Policy DQ2 Loose Valley Conservation Area

Figure 13 — Plan in support of Policy DQ2



DQ2 Conservation Area & Trees



The commemorative oak tree in the village green provides shade during the summer months, making the village a more hospitable and pleasant place to be.



Trees within private gardens can have a positive impact on public streets and spaces.



Smaller species of tree and shrubs within the conservation area help provide the distinctive setting for Loose.



Trees can help frame views and soften the view of development within landscape.



8. Next Steps

We need to hear from you



8.1 This is the submission version of the Loose Neighbourhood Plan. The neighbourhood plan process remains an ongoing project and Loose Parish Council is keen to hear the views of local residents and businesses on the ideas, concepts and policies contained in this submission plan. These comments may be used to inform the formal examination of the plan that will follow this consultation period.

8.2 Thank you for getting involved.

Submission Consultation

8.3 This is the submission version of the neighbourhood plan and Loose Parish Council and Maidstone Borough Council wants to know the views of the people who live, work or carry on business in the parish. Please send your views and opinions to Maidstone Borough Council before the end of the six week consultation period.

Independent Examination

8.4 Following the consultation period, an independent examiner will be appointed to examine the plan. Subject to the positive recommendation of the independent examiner, the plan will go forward to be the subject of a referendum, to be voted upon by the residents of the parish.

Further Information

8.5 Parish contact for further information:

- Mrs Kim Owen, Clerk to the Parish Council, “Holly Glade”, Pembroke Road, Coxheath, Maidstone, ME17 4QJ.
- 07855 000 156
- office@loose-pc.gov.uk
- <http://loosevillageinfo.wix.com/loose-nh-plan>





*“Loose...
a place
apart”*