

Notes of Public Meeting held 24 November 2024 to launch West Malling Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Held at Primary School, Norman Rd 2.00pm to 4.00pm

Background and Purpose

The meeting was organised by the West Malling Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) and publicised by a double sided colour flyer (appendix 1) delivered to each household in the Parish. Despite being held on a day when Storm Bert was raging, we had 53 residents attend, including Councillors.

The meeting was intended to launch the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) with residents, seeks views on the issues the NP is likely to cover and see if any residents had interest in being members of the Steering Group or being involved in particular areas of its study. An expression of interest form was available for residents to either say they wanted to join the steering group or to be involved in particular subject areas, this is attached as appendix 2.

Format of the meeting

The meeting commenced with two short presentations, One by Trudy Dean explaining the purpose of the NP and where Tonbridge & Malling Council were with the development of the Local Plan, not expected before 2027. The second, from Lorna Miles, Chair of the NPSG, explaining more about what a NP is, what it could do and what it could not do, the types of issues they typically cover and how long it was likely to take to develop the Plan, 2 years. Her presentation was supported by a Powerpoint presentation.



Most of the meeting involved attendees being asked to write down their views, ideas on a series of display boards using postits and felt tips. This worked well, over tea and biscuits residents chatted to each other, talked to Councillors and attached many postits to the boards. The ideas expressed are included later in this report. The meeting ended by 4.00pm.

The headings used for the display boards were:

- Transport/Highways/Parking
- Community Facilities
- Biodiversity/Climate Change
- Housing/Local heritage/Conservation
- Green Belt/Green Spaces
- Economy/Business/Retail
- Other
- What do you like most about West Malling
- What do you like least about West Malling



Views expressed by residents on the display boards

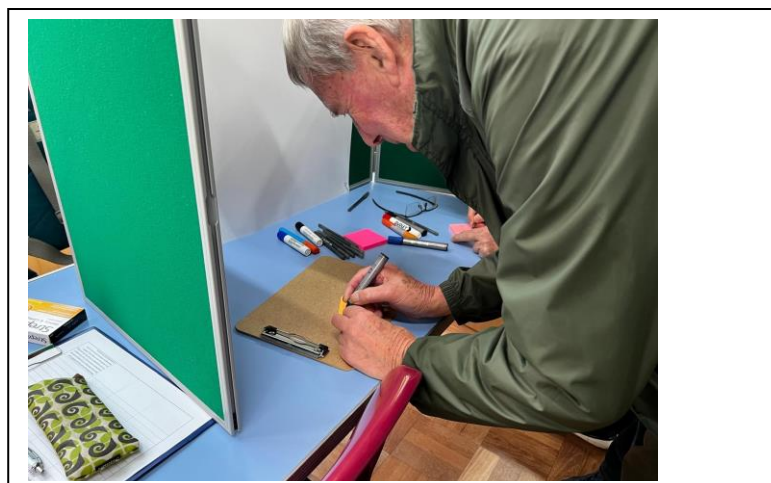
• What do you like most about West Malling?

- Plenty of green spaces
- Green spaces (2)
- Lots of green spaces. Like Manor Park and Macey's Meadows
- Close to green space, Manor Park Leybourne Woods etc
- Attractive High St with villagy feel and pretty Manor Park nearby
- The park, surrounding countryside
- We are at the last gasp for the "village"
- It has its own identity and an attractive High St.
- I love the historic buildings and the surrounding countryside
- Village feel
- Music @ Malling
- Village feel and community
- Community feel
- Not too big
- Interesting and historic town
- Stil has a range of shops apart from nails, hair and barbers
- The local shops, more needed
- The High St remains a busy and healthy destination for a wide age range
- Can still shop locally and Tesco and meet someone I know
- Farmers Market, toilets, village feel
- Small shops
- Just about enough shops
- Wonderful range of pubs, restaurants, cafes etc. Also independent shops. Nice historic setting
- Good beer
- Railway station and fast trains to London
- The town proximity to rail station

What do you dislike most about West Malling?

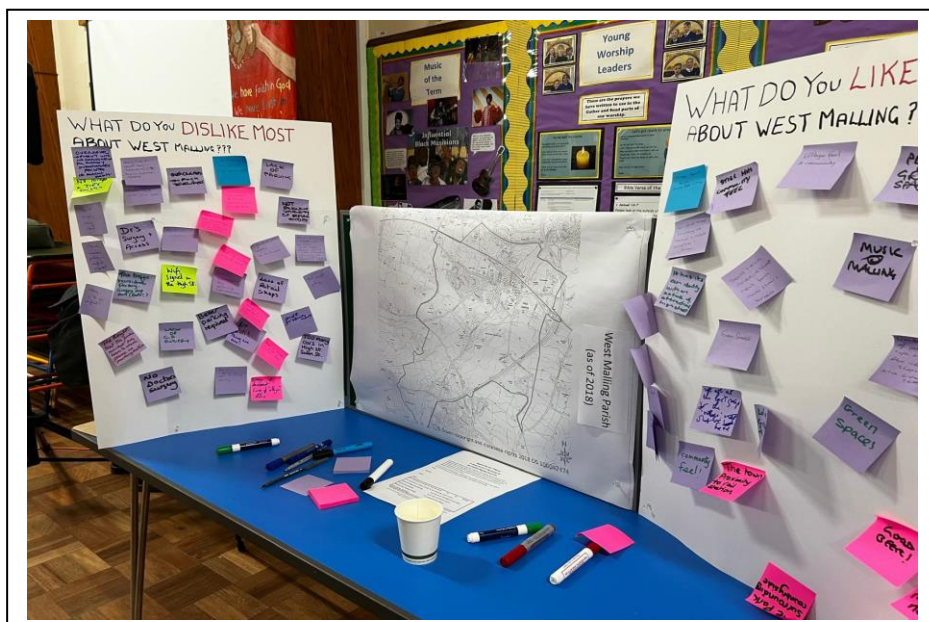
- Not enough variety of retail shops
- The repetition of the same shops/services on the High St
- Loss of diverse mix of shops
- Loss of retail shops
- No Deli, There are two???
- The traffic and inconsiderate parking, scruffy shop fronts (Boots)
- Heavy fines or short term closure of pubs due to customer rebels
- More licensing checks in our pubs. Also more communication with licensees. Training etc. Taking more responsibility and adhering to licensing laws

- Noise and mess from pubs in High St, certain one in particular, No 64
- Lack of parking
- Not enough parking
- Lack of parking for visitors
- Too many cars in High St, Swan St
- Better parking required
- Illegal parking
- The GP surgery being closed
- No longer a Dr's surgery
- No Doctors Surgery
- Access to Dr Surgery, although in their defence, are servicing such a large area
- Dr's surgery and access
- Lack of GP Surgery
- No Doctors Surgery
- Lack of Doctors, costly parking, low count of shops
- Overcrowding, too much development
- Feeling beleaguered by Planning Applications
- Over development
- Over development with no consideration for already overstretched facilities eg parking, Doctors
- Too much inconsiderate parking and insufficient enforcement
- PCO's back in West Malling daily
- Parking enforcement and parking in front of Tescos
- Inconsiderate parking and speeding
- Littering, is this ever enforced?
- Wifi signal in High St
- Mobile signal everywhere in WM
- The thought that Farmers Market may have to close. Please no parking meters



Biodiversity and Climate Change???

- PV on all properties
- Solar panels over our car parks including station
- Parking
- More TPO's please
- More TPO's/ TPO zone
- More street trees
- Permission for listed buildings to have solar panels and other energy savers
- Trees in Fartherwell Avenue
- Can we have and area of land set aside for re-wilding, that has an interconnecting corridor to existing woodland etc?
- Respond adequately and responsibly to Climate Emergency
- Tighter controls on tree felling
- The requirement for Planning Applications to include ecological enhancements and encourage the use of native planting
- Creep of development, loss of village status
- Too much dog poo
- Check situation of information to give dog owners into lake by Douces Manor after period after topical flea treatment
- Reduction of shop lights being left on 24 hrs a day, causing light pollution
- We need to stop the use of prime farmland for development. We need farms to produce crops/animals and protect our wildlife
- Hedgehog highways
- Protect the allotments
- Take away packaging wastage and over use of packaging
- Too many people sit in parked cars with engine running, especially outside Primary School
- EV charge points please
- Control effluent and run off from farms. Testing and improving water, for example Manor Park lake



Green Belt, Green Spaces???

- See “What do you like about WM”. The stand alone identity is absolutely key
- Green Belt cover land around Eden farm up to station
- Its sad when we have to lose good farm land where we can grow our own produce, but I understand the need for more smaller houses built in sympathetic surroundings
- Stop urbanisation as soon will be houses all the way to Maidstone
- Protect our identity from encroaching development
- Need to be maintaining space between towns. A bypass is not sufficient
- Extend conservation area to Ashton Way/ or green fields
- Keep fighting to preserve as much green space as possible
- Green space between WM and surrounding developments. Retain our “village” feel
- In danger of Kings Hill swallowing up West Malling. Too many developments
- Agree with above!
- Fields around by-pass should be a buffer between Kings Hill and the town
- Stop WM joining up with neighbouring settlements
- Too much housing, not enough infrastructure
- Too much new housing without infrastructure
- Too many houses being built in fields
- Stop building on Green Belt, the insects and animals need somewhere to live
- Keep West Malling independent of other villages

Economy, Business, Retail??

- More retail options please, Bakers, Butchers, Deli, Bookshops, shoes
- Support for more small local businesses giving diversity
- Provide incentives to diversify shopping experience
- It would be nice to see more “useful” independent shops eg bakery, greengrocers, clothing, deli. Not just barbers, mailbars, gifts. We do like the choice of restaurants though
- A deli and bakery
- Bookshop please
- West Malling does not need more shops to serve every need. So what that we don't have a DIY shop, train it to Maidstone
- Independent retail shops
- More diverse shops/businesses. No more hairdressers and coffee shops
- No more hairdressers. Barbers, Nail shops
- No more barbers, more independent shops
- No more hairdressers or estate agents
- We need more independent shops
- More individual independent stores
- No more hairdressers, no more “cash only. Report to tax office
- No more hairdressers, more small shops
- There are too many barbers, hairdressers and beauty salons
- Incentives for independent businesses
- More parking including free parking to encourage visitors/shoppers

- Plastic glasses for drinking outside pubs
- Plastic glasses outside pubs, plastic glasses from early evening
- Pubs to clean up fag butts and broken glasses rather than sweeping it into road
- Extend length of time that paid parking is allowed
- More free parking to support local business customers



Community Facilities??

- More formal sporting facilities at Manor Park
- Doctors
- Local Doctor
- Doctor Surgery
- As the population in WM grows older, cant drive it difficult to get medical care
- Doctors surgery required in West Malling town
- More doctors and surgeries. Too many part time doctors
- Shuttle bus between village and station
- Heavy fines of short term closure of pubs due to rebel customers
- Tennis Courts are great now
- More publicity for well maintenance of tennis courts
- Town Centre Community/Arts centre
- Weekly coffee morning at Church
- Developers to contribute more to local facilities
- More facilities for youngsters, Youth Club
- Can we have a sports/social/youth club after consultation with young people. Suggested age range 12-19 yrs
- Care to be taken with very muddy gateways at Manor Park
- Information about what is going on at the Village Hall, Better publicity required
- Community Centre. Arts Clubs, health, for young and old
- Paddle board courts
- Lower business rates, softer parking charges
- Set up a community allotment

- Too many barbers/hairdressers. No more
- Loos. Eg at WM and Otford stations open at all times trains running.

Transport, Highways, Parking??

- More policing required on WM bypass, especially at weekends. There too many speeding cars
- Yes to parking in front of Tesco
- No parking in front of Tesco
- Parking enforcement improved
- More parking wardens around the town, not just the High St
- Invest in two 20mph signs as per entrance to Kings Hill. Then nick the perpetrators
- Parking in Swan St, more needed
- Free parking for farmers market
- Allow traders for farmers Market to have sufficient parking. Noticeably fewer stalls now, retrograde step to impose a 4 hr limit, especially on a Sunday
- Please allow market traders free parking on their one Sunday a month
- Parking charges in long stay park is a mistake for businesses
- All car parking in town to be free
- More free parking to support people working in local shops, maybe a free parking permit
- Parking just gets worse, double lines at the station
- Try and stop the inconsiderate and selfish parking
- Widen bottom of Swan St, make it easier for pedestrians
- One hour for parking in High St to be free before charge is levied
- Deter double parking and parking on yellow lines
- Illegal parking on the High St which constantly causes congestion
- Monitoring/prosecution of illegal parking is needed. Softer parking charges please
- Speeding on the High St and Town Hill. 20mph limit!!!
- More parking needed, the horse fields?
- Bring back our doctors surgery
- More cycleways and cycle parking
- Bus to Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells from West Malling
- West Malling train station offers a good service but slow. Can British rail/SE Trains be asked to provide a WM to Bromley South and Victoria fast service?



Housing, Local Heritage, Conservation??

- More affordable housing, eg 2 bed houses, flats, appartements
- Over development of sites with insufficient parking
- Find a place to build more car parks
- Encourage the use of eco coverings for new driveways in new builds to reduce water run off/flooding
- The area is too busy, too much traffic etc etc
- More consideration for local wildlife and local people, Infrastructure and water pressure
- The possibility of extending the conservation area to better regulate development in the heart of West Malling
- Get businesses to maintain the exterior of properties they occupy properly
- Protect the green fields bordering Offham Rd
- Links to point on Green Belt
- Protect green spaces between towns as divide, not bypass and roads
- Keep the Green Belt green
- Please keep our Green Belt green
- Extend Green Belt to cover area between WM and East Malling
- We could make more of our heritage eg guided walks
- Preserve the High St, keep as an individual town
- Less blanket Lego building please
- Why do we need more housing when the birth rate is falling?
- We cannot resist new development. However we can determine the size/number of houses allowed. Can we try and limit a development to a proportionate number?
- More affordable housing required. £900,000 is NOT affordable
- Encourage the use of social housing where land is to be developed
- No new houses without solar panels and heat pumps
- Infrastructure facilities are overloaded
- Preserve our beautiful buildings and parklands/meadows. Upkeep of the cleanliness and roads
- More recycling facilities for businesses. All just goes in one bin

Conclusions

As a meeting to launch the Neighbourhood Plan, and despite the very poor weather, we were pleased at the number of residents who came and how readily people expressed their ideas. We were also pleased that several residents completed “Expression of Interest” forms to either say they wished to join the Steering Group or to be involved in particular subject areas. The meeting gives us a fairly clear idea of local issues and concerns.

Appendix 1 Flyer for the meeting

Public meeting

Sunday 24th November

West Malling CoE Primary School,

Norman Rd, ME19 6RL

Presentation at 2.00pm

Councillors available to answer your questions and capture your thoughts until 4.00pm

West Malling Parish Council has agreement with the Borough Council that it can develop a "Neighbourhood Plan" with the local residents to provide a guide of how we want our historic town to develop over the next 30 years

Join us for Tea and Biscuits

Creating a Neighbourhood Plan to protect and enhance West Malling

An opportunity to express your ideas and views on the priorities for West Malling to make sure that our town remains a fantastic place to live and work in the future.



Get Involved!

Have you got skills that could help us create the plan?

Come along and let us know

Unable to attend? Please see overleaf

Can't make the meeting?

If you are unable to join us on Sunday 24th November, we would still love to hear from you. In order to develop a Neighbourhood Plan

we need ideas led and supported by the people of West Malling. We are looking for realistic proposals designed to:

Protect our historic environment

Protect the natural environment

Respond to housing challenges

Improve the life of those living and working in West Malling

If you have ideas, want to be involved, or simply want more information, then either:

Provide details of your idea/s using the space below and drop this flyer back into the Parish Office at 9 The High Street, West Malling ME19 6QH.

or contact us using the details below

West Malling Parish Council

01732 870872 clerk@westmallingspc.org

Appendix 2. Expression of Interest form

Registering your interest

In being involved in developing the

West Malling Neighbourhood Plan

Developing the Neighbourhood Plan is all about West Malling Parish Council and West Malling residents working together to create a vision of what the Parish will be like over the next 30 years. We are looking for residents to take up the 6 places on the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, which meets monthly, and/or to get involved in specific issues the Neighbourhood Plan will be looking at.

If you want to be involved please complete this form and leave with the sign in desk today or post through the door at the Parish Council Office, 9 the Hight St, West Malling.

Name

Address

Email

Phone

I am interested in joining the Steering Group	YES	NO	MAYBE
I am interested in being involved in the following subject areas:-			
Transport/Highways/Parking	Housing/Local Heritage/Conservation		
Community Facilities	Green Belt and Green Spaces		
Biodiversity/ Climate Change	Economy/Business/Retail		
Other (please describe).....			

West Malling Parish Council (WMPC) will store this information in connection to the Neighbourhood Plan only. Your information will not be passed to 3rd parties. By providing your details you are consenting to WMPC retaining your details until the end of the project.

