

CHART SUTTON – DRAFT VISION STATEMENT

Summary

Chart Sutton Parish, both the central village and outlying areas, will retain its rural character and community spirit. Residents of the parish appreciate the peace and quiet afforded by its location. Any new development will be directed to the most sustainable parts of the parish and its design will respect the natural environment and our heritage whilst meeting the needs of all age groups in the community. We will strive to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the parish, notably the Greensand Way. We will support opportunities that enable our residents and visitors to access our natural spaces more easily as it is recognised that these promote wellbeing. Community facilities such as the Village Hall and St Michael's Church will remain focal points within the village and they will, where possible, be improved to become more attractive to residents. Preservation of our rurality is paramount.

Objective 1: Rurality To safeguard the rural character of the parish that provides residents. This includes improving access to the Greensand Way, Recreation Ground, protecting the Green Belt, safeguarding the important and dramatic views into and out of the villages and across the Weald and protecting trees, hedgerows and ponds. The distinctive, ridgeline landscape, ancient woodlands and open, farming character will be preserved.

Objective 2: Heritage To preserve and celebrate our built heritage and the identities of the individual settlements. Combined, these give a sense of place and character. All new development must be carefully and sustainably designed to enhance what exists already. The encroachment caused by the rapidly expanding Maidstone will be guarded against.

Objective 3: Environment To support the diversity of wildlife and habitats that is found here. Living close to nature is the reason so many people love our area. We aim to enhance and protect nature through the creation of improved habitats for wildlife, maintenance of native hedgerows and planting more trees and wildflowers. Dark skies are rare and, despite the proximity of Maidstone, Chart Sutton enjoys a low level of light pollution and this is to be actively preserved in our neighbourhood. The expansion of polytunnels is to be resisted where possible.

Objective 4: Housing To support limited housing growth that helps to meet the needs of residents in terms of size, tenure (to buy/to rent) and affordability of homes. Development in our neighbourhood area should encourage healthy lifestyles and conserve the architectural and historical features of the area. Any development should

use appropriate materials and styles, including ragstone and Kent peg tiles. Consideration will be given to community housing provision for both young and older people and any housing should be restricted two storey dwellings. The urban cul-de-sac model will be discouraged. Adequate green space is to be provided, preferably with ponds.

Objective 5: Wellbeing To improve and better connect our network of footpaths, cycleways and bridleways so that people can access local and nearby facilities more easily. This may well necessitate improved signage. Homes within the village confines should link to facilities by safe, attractive and inviting walkable routes to encourage healthy lifestyles. something for everyone. In the village centre, support networks will enable elders to live in their own homes. Young families will have safe places to play, walk and cycle. Events will build unity and community spirit. We will continue to encourage use of the village hall as a community hub. Clean energy use in the villages will be welcomed and we will consider environmentally friendly schemes such as improved waste recycling and community energy schemes. The health and well-being of our community will be a priority. Communications (mobile phone and internet connectivity) will be improved.

Objective 6: Facilities Chart Sutton badly needs a village hub; a convenient meeting place (for parents and others) that also be used to accommodate peripatetic services eg hairdresser, GP, Bank, chiropodist, clothing etc. Such a community hub could include a café or this could possibly be incorporated within an updated village shop. A community orchard or allotments would also improve village life. Other improvements needed include enhanced broadband (essential for local businesses and those who frequently work from home), traffic speed and pavements that actually connect all parts of the village. Efforts to prevent or mitigate the effects of flooding in parts of the village are to be continued.