



Dear Local Plan Team,

Response to the Draft Local Plan 2024-2040

Background

The Parish of Iden has 258 dwellings and approximately 500 residents. Of these properties, originally 58 were built as social housing but over the years many were purchased under the Right to Buy Scheme and have not been replaced. A further 39 have Grade 2 listed status.

For many years the village has been regarded by Rother Planning as an area of outstanding natural beauty and as such new developments have been restricted within a tightly drawn development area with applications outside of this refused. The last development was in the 1970s (Parkwood for social housing) and since then only 5 new houses have been permitted.

The result of this limitation is that demand for housing with a limited stock has pushed up values and over the years Iden has become a magnet for the retired. In the past five years we have seen a few residents who have downsized from properties in the London area, spending considerable sums on improvements.

The number of properties to rent has increased together with second homes and a few holiday lets and Air BNB.

There has also been a serious issue for residents living in large properties wishing to downsize and remain in the village where smaller properties are hard to find.

The village also has its own convenience store and Post Office which others locally do not, and this has been an attraction to incomers.

Employment in Iden is limited with the two large farming estates mainly relying upon seasonal workers. The largest employer is Lankelma with a workforce of 31 but these do not live locally. There are various small businesses in units around the village and the former apple packing station in Wittersham Road is mainly used for storage with other small units for the self-employed.

The upshot of these demographic changes has been that Iden has moved over the years mainly to a retirement village with the number of young families and children declining

along with local tradesmen.

In the past twenty years, the village has lost three of its football and one cricket team through the lack of local players. The present cricket team is composed entirely of non-residents. This has combined to seriously limit the usage of our playing field and the sports pavilion which is now only used in the summer months.

In 2011 a development for 18 new dwelling and 2 starter units at the former Packing station, although supported by the Parish Council but at a lower density was refused inter alia as being outside of the development area, a local employer and in an area of outstanding natural beauty.

Listed Building Consideration

Special care and consideration should be given to Iden because its listed buildings (42 in total with 39 being dwellings) compose almost 20% of all homes and the largest percentage of any village in Rother (which has 2,200 listings over its 200 square miles). These buildings are valued for their special architectural or historical interest and their owners undertake to conserve and maintain their status and understand this responsibility by no introduction of unsuitable alterations which, by law, may result in criminal prosecution. The siting of any modern housing development within Iden must therefore be chosen most carefully in order to avoid altering the character of the village forever. Iden is small and lacks infrastructure: there is no mains gas and the water supply, only connected fully in the 60's as there was widespread well use before this date, is sometimes barely adequate for the present population and frequently has low pressure and fairly regular water and electricity outages. Presumably, sewage services are only adequate for the present number of dwellings too. There has been no school in Iden since the 1930's, with children travelling to Playden or Peasmarsch, and there are no medical services. The village community has set up its own group to deal with emergencies (ICE: Iden Community Emergency) with responsibility to care for all residents during power, water and other more serious emergencies. Their most recent response was on Wednesday 26 June when a speeding lorry through Main Street took down an overhead BT cable, pulled down the telegraph pole and put half of the residents out of telephone communication for days. The lorry did not stop. Were there any pedestrians in the vicinity, or other vehicles, his could have been a fatal incident. ICE officials slowed traffic, removed the pole to a safe place and stayed there until emergency services arrived much later. Speeding remains an issue for Iden, and the siting of any housing must be carefully chosen. Iden is an ancient Domesday Village whose residents acknowledge wholeheartedly the need for affordable and social housing, but they know, recognise and love the ancient footprint of Iden and feel it vital that sites for development are chosen with their involvement and not merely those of a developer.

Parish Council's Position regarding New Housing

The Parish Council fully supports the aims and objectives of the Local Plan.

We also acknowledge again that new additional housing in the village must be a priority in determining future policy.

Whilst respecting its present status, the present development boundary needs to be revised to facilitate affordable housing to encourage younger occupiers and diversity.

It is also vital that any new plan has residents' consent and is seen to be equitable with all areas of the village taking its share of any new dwellings. It is also important that Iden retains its special status as a village of outstanding natural beauty and that we do not see

any ribbon developments or high-density developments.

Up to now the village has not been able to benefit from Section 106 but we hope that with the changed policy, this will allow us to take advantage of these monies to facilitate much needed improvements to amenities which have for too long have been neglected through lack of funding.

It is also assumed that employment opportunities will be few, other than for self-employed. We accept that for this to be achieved, the present development envelope will need to be expanded and on occasions to allow pockets of stand-alone sites within the village. We note that the projections are for up to 15 new dwellings in Iden up to 2029 to include the existing IDE 0001 and IDE0011 both of which are now being considered under a submitted planning application.

However, we do not support the prospect you suggest of all new development being on one side of the village. Residents there are presently experiencing the aforementioned challenging planning application for 15 new houses on a controversial site that was not supported by the Parish Council because of its unsuitability.

In the circumstances we must again direct you to IDE006 This is the former packing station now used mainly by Morfeys removals who also have an extensive warehouse at Rye Harbour.

On your own admittance, the site does not contribute to the local landscape and is deteriorating. We also do not agree that this area is away from local services and the employment considerations can be overcome by having small business units on site.

When this location was the subject to the planning application in 2011 the Parish Council supported a lower density development and, in our view, this would be an ideal fit for the affordable housing this village needs, without compromising Iden's status as an area of outstanding beauty.

Whilst it would create an island outside the development envelope, this would not mean opening up the entire Wittersham Road to any further housing situations.

We have examined the various sites on the schedule, many of which are clearly unsuitable. However, there may be pockets in the remainder which may lend themselves to appropriate housing without compromising the principles outlined above.

We suggest that the Parish Council should have the opportunity to discuss these schedules with Planning as it is vital that we work together to enable a strategy for new housing in the village to evolve.

Yours Sincerely,



On behalf of Iden Parish Council
Mary Philo
Clerk to Iden Parish Council