TATSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT 2015
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Aims

- to articulate the vision of Tatsfield as expressed in the 2013 Village Appraisal
- to provide the Parish Council with a valid benchmark for considering planning applications
- to influence householders and developers to ensure a high standard of development is proposed
- to influence the planning authority in its consideration of planning and development matters for Tatsfield

Background

Tatsfield can trace its origins back a thousand years or more. In the Domesday Book of 1086, the Normans recorded that they had inherited from Saxon England a scattering of farmsteads in what was then known as Tatelelfe with perhaps only two dozen inhabitants. That figure had risen to only 100 by the year 1725. It was only in the late 1800s, as Londoners began to look outside the capital for places to live and wealthier landowners began to break up their estates into hundreds of small building plots that numbers began to rise significantly.

Development was encouraged as plans were announced for new railway lines. Several schemes would have meant running a line through the North Downs under Tatsfield but the only local one to be built was between Woldingham and Oxted. The only one intended to serve Tatsfield was the Orpington, Cudham and Tatsfield Light Railway. This was given the go-ahead in 1898 with its terminus where Tatsfield School is now sited, but the promoters were not able to raise the money needed.

Nevertheless, the prospect of better transport links with London helped Tatsfield expand into a modest village with 600 residents by 1901. Some people decided to buy land on which to build a family home. Others took advantage of the potentially greater accessibility of the village to have a plot or two on which to plant fruit trees or erect simple summer weekend accommodation. From these beginnings came the wide variety of building styles and Tatsfield’s 21st century character.

The village lies within the Green Belt at one of the highest points on the North Downs with extensive views across the south to the Kentish Weald. At its northern tip is a buffer zone with the London Borough of Bromley, where a transition is made between the countryside and the suburban expansion of Biggin Hill valley.
The heart of the village is Westmore Green with its pond, village hall, pub, restaurant, club, shops and – since 2010 – the village school. The area has a large open grassed space, many large trees and is bounded by mature hedgerows. It has an informal charm which contributes strongly to its character as experienced by people entering the village.

Since the Second World War, the village has found itself transformed from “a curiosity .. a shack colony of tiny houses almost lost in foliage” (Richard Church, 1948) to what estate agents now prefer to describe as this “charming”, “picturesque” or “idyllic” village!

Each decade has seen an increase in the number of homes in Tatsfield. Significant developments intensifying the residential use of a site in the 1940s included Whitewood Cottages. In the 1950s, two dozen homes were created in Paynesfield Road, the Square and in Westmore Road. Development in the 1960s brought dozens more, including Rag Hill Close and Shipfield Close. Valley Mushroom Farm and Crossways Court were among the two dozen homes to appear in the 1970s. The major development of the 1980s was Wedgwoods with twenty homes but others were built in Greenway and Westmore Road. In the 1990s, extensions were the order of the day, but Park Farm in Rag Hill Road became four new houses.

The first decade of the new century brought a flurry of new developments, including ten dwellings in Johns Road, nine in Ship Hill and thirteen in Lusted Hall Lane. And, since then, a further ten have been added in Lusted Hall Lane and seven next to the Village Hall.

In the past (as demonstrated in several Village Appraisals) people have come to live in Tatsfield because they enjoy its semi-rural aspect and the easy access to open countryside; they remain because of the strong community spirit in the village. An example over the years has been the Gold awards in South East in Bloom competitions for the
high level of participation of so many villagers. The diverse built environment is part of Tatsfield's semi-rural nature; its sense of isolation and setting within the Green Belt need to be maintained for villagers and visitors alike.

The Parish Council and Tatsfield’s residents wish to protect this environment and see the key elements as:

- its semi-rural status as a Defined Village within the Green Belt
- the sense that the village marks the transition between town and country and looks out to open countryside from the North Downs
- the initial impact of the village scene at its centre
- its strong links with the natural environment, as shown by well-used village greens, mature trees and innumerable shaws and hedgerows; and conversely, the spaces between them; as well as the network of footpaths, bridleways and unmade roads which criss-cross the village
- its role as a natural wildlife habitat for a number of species
- its unique community spirit and the diversity of its built environment
- its economic profile and its range of property values and how these can be influenced by the planning process
- the adequacy of infrastructure and utilities to service existing housing as well as new accommodation and the effect of development on Tatsfield's mix of metalled and unmade roads

Strategy

The Parish Council strongly supports Tandridge District Council in its desire to see a high level of design quality and materials and will expect new development and extensions to demonstrate it. The following policy references are taken from the Tandridge District Core Strategy and the Tandridge Local Plan.

A Green Belt: Tandridge District is 94% Green Belt and therefore in order to meet its future housing targets the risk of Green Belt erosion is always present. The Green Belt designation surrounding Tatsfield was reviewed in 2013 (Policy DP10 of the Tandridge Local Plan).

Tandridge District Council acknowledges the importance of the Green Belt and proposes no changes to the current boundaries, unless sufficient land cannot be identified for housing within existing settlements. In this instance growth will be directed to sustainable locations on land immediately adjoining built up areas i.e. which are currently within the Green Belt. This should prevent Tatsfield being swallowed up by Biggin Hill's suburban sprawl to the detriment of the gradual transition from a suburban to a rural landscape on the border between Greater
London and Surrey. (Policy DP10 of the Tandridge Local Plan, Section 7 of the 2013 Village Appraisal report - Environment - and Section 10 of the 2013 Village Appraisal report - Housing and Planning).

B **Development Transition:** Villagers expect the Parish Council to be vigilant in maintaining a distinct difference between development within the Defined Village (Policy DP10 of the Tandridge Local Plan) and the remainder of the Green Belt. In recent years there have been approvals of both extensions to increase the size of properties and the subdivision of larger plots to accommodate smaller dwellings. Whilst many feel this trend should now be curbed it must be acknowledged that this does allow for downsizing and allowing young people to continue living in the village. There has been consistent opposition over the decades to any proposals for extensive housing on agricultural land to the south of the village centre outside the Defined Village.

C **Natural Environment:** The hallmark of the village is its host of mature trees – surrounding Westmore and Tatsfield Greens - and the density of woodland cover, such as Kemsley Wood. Every effort will be made to identify and protect this feature as well as the habitats of a number of wildlife species, both in general and as part of planning guidance. (Policy CSP21 of the Tandridge Core Strategy). The Parish Council will ensure that consideration is given and reference made to this issue when commenting on applications. The Parish Council will endeavour to be more proactive in recognising and registering existing and potential Tree Preservation Order sites. (Policy DP7 of the Tandridge Local Plan). Footpath and bridleway networks need constant monitoring and the Parish Council will respond to locally expressed concerns, working with Surrey County Council and local landowners to maintain the integrity of this network. (Policy CSP13 of the Tandridge Core Strategy).

D **Village Centre:** Westmore Green is the focus of activities in Tatsfield. The village centre (comprising Westmore Green, the children’s playground, the pond, the pub, the club, a restaurant, a shop, the village hall, the school and the bus stop) is more than the sum of its parts and is pleasing to the eye and welcoming to visitors. This asset would be devalued if any part were lost or radically altered. During the transformation of the Old Bakery into a restaurant, efforts were made to restore the curiosity of its corner “tower”. This is very much part of the village scene, as is the "Railway Hotel" facade of the Old Ship pub, which was registered as an Asset of Community Value in 2013.
In the same year, the White House, also fronting onto Westmore Green, was listed by Tandridge District Council as a ‘building of character’. The centre of Tatsfield must be preserved as a harmonious and much-used focal point of village life. Any proposed development needs to be judged according to the value it adds to the village centre as a whole (Policies DP7 and DP12 of the Tandridge Local Plan).

E Development within the Defined Village: Every road in Tatsfield has its own unique character. This must be respected when planning permission is considered, so that the variety of housing can be maintained but the overall rural aspect of the village also be preserved (Policy DP7 of the Tandridge Local Plan).

F Parking: There are two significant issues regarding parking in Tatsfield: residents’ on-street parking and parking generated by the school, both evident in the village centre. The main roads leading into the village are Ricketts Hill Road, Ship Hill and Approach Road (all are bus routes) and also Church Hill, Tatsfield Lane and Lusted Hall Lane. There is usually little problem with parking on these roads, with the exception of the village end of Lusted Hall Lane, where there are fewer off-street parking options. The main problem areas are undoubtedly Westmore Road and Paynesfield Road, particularly close to the shops and at junctions and also exacerbated by school drop-off and pick-up times. This problem is not easily solved apart from formal parking restrictions and enforcement or traffic flow management (one way systems). Currently accidents are avoided by slower speeds, and more consideration and patience. The Parish Council is open to suggested solutions but also has to be aware of the needs of local shops and businesses.

Parking Policy DP7 of the Tandridge Local Plan states that applications should have regard to Tandridge’s adopted Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (2012). Proposals for development in Tatsfield should ensure that there is sufficient, realistic provision for on-site parking, especially in those parts of the Defined Village of Tatsfield where on-road parking is a particular problem.
G  **Housing:** A quarter of the dwellings in Tatsfield come within Council Tax bands A-D. In the last ten years, most new development has been of two or three bedroom houses. (Between 2005 and 2014, approvals were given for four one-bedroom dwellings, 23 two-bedroom, 24 three-bedroom, six four-bedroom and seven five-bedroom dwellings.) Future proposals need to be considered in the light of needs assessments and infrastructure implications. The popularity of the village as a place to live has made it virtually impossible for first-time buyers to find accommodation; this includes young people brought up in Tatsfield. Both affordable housing schemes were over-subscribed. In 2005, Tandridge allowed a small affordable housing development on its own land on the edge of the Green Belt which had been reserved for housing. The Parish Council acknowledged the value of this move to increase the stock of small dwellings and in 2011 worked with Tandridge and a specialist Housing Association to provide an additional 10 units on an adjacent ‘rural exception site’ just inside the Green Belt. Both of these developments provide rented accommodation but may not be appropriate for downsizing, for which there is an identified need in Tatsfield.

H  **Roads:** The network of metalled and unmade roads is idiosyncratic but should be respected and not ignored in the development process. The Parish Council does not intend to take a fixed approach to the question of surfacing unmade roads but will listen to the majority view of the residents of any particular road. Issues such as drainage, potholes, road width, accessibility for services etc. are all important. If residents wish to improve the surface of their road and intend to fund the work, the Parish Council will, subject to appropriate provision being made for dealing with any excess run-off of water, consider financial assistance, but the project must be resident-led.

I  **Utilities:** Tatsfield has tended to be at the end of the line as far as public utilities are concerned. In the 1890s, as housing development got underway, there were proposals for a telegraph office, but local landowners said they preferred an improvement in the postal service first! It was in this decade that the need for a mains water supply became an issue. This was still a significant issue in the 1940s, and some properties were still using wells in the 1970s. Local businesses began to sport their own two-digit telephone numbers in the 1920s and the telephone exchange in Ship Hill lasted until the 1980s. The Sevenoaks and District Electricity Company began supplying Tatsfield households in the 1920s, but St Mary’s Church was not connected until 1959. Main drainage became a persistent issue in the first half of the last century, although it wasn’t until the 1950s and 60s that it became the norm for houses to be connected to a public sewer. Even today, a significant number of
dwellings rely on cesspools or septic tanks. The last traditional utility to arrive in Tatsfield was gas. It was in 1990 that work started on providing a mains supply to Tatsfield.

High-speed fibre broadband did not come to the centre of the village until 2013. When the Parish Council is involved in any consultation on future development in the village it will ensure that the capacity of the infrastructure is an important consideration.

Hedges, fences and walls: In view of the varied and unique character of each road in Tatsfield, particular regard needs to be made to Policy DP9 of the Local Plan in which native hedging, shrubs or low wooden fencing are generally considered to be more in keeping with the informality of such areas. Householders are encouraged to seek local professional advice on tree health, on judicious pruning rather than removal of vegetation and how to avoid high impervious boundary treatments. Advice should be sought on the planting of species appropriate to Tatsfield and their long-term implications. Attention also needs to be paid to preserving the integrity of grass verges by ensuring that adequate on-site parking is provided for residential development.

25th February 2015