

# ENVIRONMENT

## Overview

Fawkham is a rural parish covering some 664 hectares.

The Parish has a distinctive landform and character: the **long, steep Fawkham dry chalk valley**, the steep dry tributary of Pennis valley to the east, and the Horton Wood ridge to the west which separates the Fawkham Valley from the Darent Valley. To the east of the Parish is a wider plateau on which the settlements of Hartley and New Ash Green are situated.

The local topography and landscape character provide a number of **important views** of the surrounding countryside from public vantage points. The dispersed nature of development and limited external lighting ensures the Parish enjoys **dark skies** and a low level of light pollution.

The hamlet of Fawkham comprises **three small clusters of development** dispersed along the valley floor: Fawkham Green; a cluster adjoining the primary school and village hall; and Baldwins Green. Low density linear development extends from Hartley down Castle Hill, along one side. The Parish also has a number of dispersed farmsteads and houses.

The countryside and low density dispersed buildings lie **entirely within the Green Belt**.

Fawkham Parish has a **rich historic environment**, with settlement dating back to the Stone Age, and is host to 13 listed buildings/structures, the earliest being the Grade 1 St. Mary's Church dating from the 12th Century.

In accordance with national policy, the strategic role set for Fawkham in the adopted Local Plan, limited accessible services and the absence of significant local needs, **priority is given to protecting the distinctive landscape character of the countryside** including the key components of trees, woodland and hedgerows, rural lanes and important public views. The planning strategy also seeks **to protect and enhance biodiversity**, including four Local Wildlife Sites, and **conserve local heritage assets**, including listed buildings, the historic character of Baldwin's Green Conservation Area, and their settings.

**We have prepared the following policies that would be applied by Sevenoaks Council whenever a planning application comes in to make sure their decision conforms with the Neighbourhood Plan and so ultimately reflects what people in Fawkham think is important and needed.**

# ENVIRONMENT

## Natural Environment

### Landscape

Fawkham Parish has a **strong rural character**, despite its proximity to London and to the nearby settlements of Hartley, Longfield and New Ash Green. It retains a sense of **tranquillity** and a **sense of visual and physical isolation** from surrounding developments.

The **steep, dry Fawkham Valley** runs north-south. At the southern end are twin valley heads, and a further dry valley (the Pennis Valley) feeds in on the eastern side. To the west of the Fawkham Valley is a ridge of high land which separates the Fawkham Valley from the Darent Valley. To the east is a wider plateau on which the settlements of Hartley and New Ash Green are situated.

**Dark skies** represent one of the key characteristics of the local landscape: satellite maps of light pollution show the majority of the Parish experiences low levels of radiance, especially in comparison with adjoining Parishes. Higher levels of radiance are seen at the southern end of the Parish from Brands Hatch racing circuit, which lies beyond the Parish boundary.

It is recognised that some **external lighting** may be justified for reasons of safety, security or to enable the use of sports facilities. In such cases, the impact of lighting should be minimised.

When preparing this Plan, **you told us that the landscape is highly valued.**

Five **Local Landscape Character Areas** (LLCAs) were identified by the Fawkham Local Landscape Character Assessment, some of which extend across the Parish boundary, and these are shown on Map 1:

- Horton Wood Ridge LLCA
- Upper Fawkham Valley LLCA
- Central Fawkham Valley LLCA
- Pennis Valley LLCA (extends into Hartley parish)
- Lower Fawkham Valley LLCA (extends into Hartley parish)

# ENVIRONMENT

## Horton Wood Ridge

Located in the far west of the Parish, from Churchdown Wood in the north to the M20 in the south. It is a ridge of high land which forms the watershed between the Fawkham Valley and the Darent Valley, forming the skyline for both.

This is a relatively large scale landscape, comprising generally large fields and woodland blocks, with an open, elevated and exposed feel, and few buildings.

The landform means there are long panoramic views to the west and north, with central London, Canary Wharf and Essex visible on a clear day. The wide horizons and distant views contrast with the more enclosed feel of the Fawkham Valley.

### Valued landscape qualities of Horton Wood Ridge:

- General lack of built development
- Open character with contrasting large woodland blocks (including Ancient Woodland) within and adjacent to it, and small areas of surviving traditional orchard and field margins
- A sense of detachment from surrounding settlements
- An agricultural landscape with a simple pattern of fields and woodland blocks
- An elevated feel, with long views from it, particularly to the west and north
- Forms the skyline when seen from lower land.

# ENVIRONMENT

## Upper Fawkham Valley

Located in the south of the Parish, comprising the two steep dry valleys at the head of the Fawkham Valley, and the high land between them. The dramatic landform, which is emphasised by the wooded vegetation, is a dominant characteristic.

The nucleated cluster at Fawkham Green is located where the two tributary valleys meet. It is identified on early 19th Century maps, and contains a number of historic buildings, including the Rising Sun Inn.

Lanes run along the tributary valley floors and also link them. Many of the lanes are deep, narrow and steep.

The area is well-wooded, particularly on high land between the valleys, and on the upper valley sides. Large parts of the woodland are publicly accessible, and some are Ancient Woodland and Local Wildlife Sites. The combination of landform, vegetation and historic features create an enclosed, strongly textured landscape with a distinctive sense of place.

### Valued landscape qualities of Upper Fawkham Valley:

- The strongly-rural character, including lanes
- The nucleated form of Fawkham Green and the relative lack of ribbon development along lanes
- Woodland and trees, including Ancient Woodland and access land
- The strong relationship between woodland and landform (with open land below and woodland above) which emphasises the dramatic landform
- A variety of historic buildings, including Listed Buildings.

# ENVIRONMENT

## Central Fawkham Valley

Located at the centre of the Parish and comprising the central part of the Fawkham Valley. It includes the small cluster of development around the school and village hall, as well as more dispersed properties along lanes. These include several historic farmsteads and other historic buildings along the valley floor.

This is a well-wooded and treed landscape, with blocks of woodland (including some Ancient Woodland) and many mature trees and hedges. The eastern valley side is characterised by remnants of Parkfield Wood, later adapted to form ornamental grounds for Fawkham Manor, along with the remains of Pennis Wood and also Hatchfield Wood.

A peaceful, gentle and strongly-rural landscape, with striking dramatic views across and along the valley. It has high visual quality, and many opportunities to enjoy the views from lanes and footpaths. It also has areas (particularly away from roads) with a sense of peace and tranquillity.

### Valued landscape qualities of Central Fawkham Valley:

- A dominance of landform and vegetation, rather than buildings
- Strongly-rural character with little settlement, small-scale buildings and narrow rural lanes
- A mosaic of farmland and woodland (much of which is Ancient Woodland) creating a varied and well-treed character and a diversity of habitats
- Many views across and along the valley from roads and footpaths
- Historic buildings (including historic farmsteads) and their settings, which retain strong connection with their immediate rural surroundings.

# ENVIRONMENT

## Pennis Valley

Located in the eastern part of the Parish and the western part of Hartley Parish, extending into Ash-cum-Ridley Parish to the south. It comprises the discrete dry valley of the Pennis Valley - a tributary of the main Fawkham Valley.

Its landform creates a secluded and enclosed feel within the valley, although there are views into it from surrounding high land, including adjacent LLCAs.

It has a strongly recreational character as it contains a number of sports and recreation facilities, including golf courses and sports grounds. The golf courses have a particularly strong impact on its character, especially in terms of the species, ages and patterns of trees, the past loss of Ancient Woodland, and the erosion of traditional field patterns (although some lines of mature trees and ancient hedges remain). It is valued for private and public recreation facilities, including footpaths.

Buildings/ structures are often recreational in function. There are relatively few domestic properties (limited to the peripheries), and the larger-scale agricultural/ industrial/ recreational buildings at Gay Dawn Farm form a single cluster in the valley floor at its centre.

### Valued landscape qualities of Pennis Valley:

- Enclosed landform and abundant trees create a sense of enclosure and seclusion in the valley floor.
- Rural recreational character which retains traces of its earlier agricultural land uses (e.g. mature trees along former hedgelines, mature hedges, and bluebells in former woodland areas)
- Long views into it from surrounding high land, including the Central Fawkham Valley and Hartley Hill Plateau LLCAs
- Relatively little development, with few domestic properties, and the larger buildings at Gay Dawn Farm forming a single cluster of low rise buildings in a limited part of the valley floor
- The soft green edge – including Ancient Woodland - to existing development on the western side of Hartley
- Extensive tree, grassland and woodland cover with associated wildlife habitats (although little is currently designated)
- Extensive network of public rights of way (including ancient hollow way behind Pennis Farm).

# ENVIRONMENT

## Lower Fawkham Valley

Located in the north of the Parish, containing land within both Fawkham and Hartley parishes, it comprises fields and woodlands on both sides of the Fawkham Valley, and land along Castle Hill. There is strong visual connectivity across it, with views east-west across the valley from the upper valley sides. There is therefore strong inter-visibility between the parishes. The sloping nature of the topography means that much of it is highly visible, and there are many views from lanes, footpaths and accessible areas within it. The open land around St Mary's Church has a strong visual connection to the surrounding rural landscape.

Much is in agricultural use, but there are also significant blocks of woodland (including Ancient Woodland) and grassland. Baldwin's Green Conservation Area is located here, including St. Mary's Church. Castle Hill is a rural lane with properties set back from the road, often in large grounds. There are glimpsed views north over open fields or into woodland.

### Valued landscape qualities of Lower Fawkham Valley:

- Prominent non-developed slopes which contribute to views and sense of place
- The strongly-rural character
- Open/ treed horizons which reinforce the rural character (properties in Hartley are not visible from Valley Road, and only limited rooftops may be glimpsed from the footpath below Churchdown Wood on the opposite side of the valley)
- The rural character of Castle Hill with woodland, open fields and occasional larger properties in grounds to the northern side and generally discrete detached houses on the southern side with long back gardens which screen the properties in longer views from the south
- Nature Conservation Sites, including Churchdown Wood LWS, which along with Ancient Woodland, traditional orchard, grassland and historic hedges, have landscape, heritage and ecological value
- Baldwin's Green Conservation Area (and the Listed St Mary's Church within it) and their settings, which create a strong and much appreciated sense of place and history
- Notable views within and also beyond as far as London to the west
- The rural character of Valley Road and Castle Hill with narrow winding lanes, informal edges and dispersed properties.

# ENVIRONMENT

## Policy FNP1: Protection and Enhancement of Landscape Character

Within Fawkham Parish priority will be given to protecting and enhancing the visually rural and predominantly undeveloped landscape from inappropriate development.

A proposal for development will only be permitted where it would:

- a) be informed by, and contribute to, local landscape character;
- b) respect the landscape qualities of the Horton Wood Ridge; Upper Fawkham Valley; Central Fawkham Valley; Pennis Valley and Lower Fawkham Valley Local Landscape Character Areas;
- c) ensure development would not visually intrude onto the undeveloped horizons and undeveloped slopes of the Upper, Central and Lower Fawkham Valley;
- d) protect and enhance the distinctive pattern of woodland on high ground and upper valley sides;
- e) retain and enhance existing hedgerows as landscape features;
- f) minimise the visual impact of conversions or redevelopment so that they do not have a materially greater impact on the landscape than the current development; and
- g) maintain the areas of dark skies and low level of light pollution away from existing light sources.

Proposals for private or public external lighting which are required for safe access and, where carefully justified, for security purposes should:

- i) include full details of the proposed lighting to be installed (number, design, specification, position and method of control);
- ii) comply with the current guidelines on the Reduction of Obtrusive Light for rural areas (zone E2) set out by the Institute of Lighting Professionals as a minimum;
- iii) be time limited, ideally motion-controlled and installed at a low height;
- iv) limit the correlated colour temperature of lamps to 3000 Kelvins or less
- v) include full shielding (at the horizontal and above) of any lighting fixture exceeding 500 initial lumens.

Floodlighting to enable the use of sports facilities will need strong justification and will be required to have time restrictions and automated controls for switch off and dimming with reference to the Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light, The Institute of Lighting Professionals 2021, and any subsequent revisions.

---

*Let us know if you agree or disagree with this policy, or have suggestions as to how it should be changed, and why, via the questionnaire (Question 3).*



# ENVIRONMENT

## Woodland, trees and hedgerows

The Parish contains **significant blocks of Ancient Woodland** - areas that have been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD - including: Churchdown Wood, Parkfield Wood, Pennis Wood, Saxten's Wood, Cage's Wood, Rogers Wood, Choaks Wood, Wilmay Copse and part of Horton Wood. Several are designated as Local Wildlife Sites. Almost 13% of the Parish is Ancient Woodland.

A number of the Parish's hedgerows are considered important and protected under Hedgerow Regulations 1997, as shown on Map 2.

Extensive woodland and trees - **22% of the Parish is covered by woodland** - make a significant contribution to the local landscape character by emphasising the dramatic landform and creating a sense of contrast with the open fields, and providing changing seasonal colour and texture.

As these features are a vital component of the local landscape character, biodiversity, amenity recreation and green infrastructure, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to conserve and enhance them.

## Policy FNP2: Woodland, trees and hedgerows

**A proposal for development will only be permitted where it would:**

- a) conserve and enhance woodland, trees and hedgerows;**
- b) protect Ancient Woodland, as defined on Map 2, and ancient and veteran trees;**
- c) protect Important Hedgerows, as defined on Map 2;**
- d) demonstrate that suitable opportunities for the restoration, enhancement or planting of woodland, trees and hedgerows are identified and incorporated provided this would avoid damaging valued areas of other habitat such as species-rich grassland;**
- e) provide adequate protection zones and buffers around existing hedgerows and trees to prevent damage to root systems, taking account of future growth; and**
- f) use an appropriate mix of native species.**

---

*Let us know if you agree or disagree with this policy, or have suggestions as to how it should be changed, and why, via the questionnaire (Question 4).*

# ENVIRONMENT

## Important Public Views

One of the distinctive features of Fawkham Parish is **panoramic and dramatic views**, including several across and along the valley which are strongly rural in character, as well as views from high land with visibility occasionally as far as Central London, Canary Wharf and across the Thames to Essex.

We have identified 14 Important Public Views shown on Map 3 which play an important part in the perception of the local landscape and are valued by local residents.

## Policy FNP3: Protect Important Public Views

**A proposal for development should maintain and not adversely impact the distinctive views of the surrounding countryside from public vantage points, in particular the Important Public Views defined in Map 3.**

*Let us know if you agree or disagree with this policy, or have suggestions as to how it should be changed, and why, via the questionnaire (Question 5).*

# ENVIRONMENT

## Rural Lanes

Another distinctive feature is the narrow lanes. Even the principal route along the floor of Fawkham Valley is narrow and is without a footway for most of its length. These **narrow, curving, mostly sunken, lanes** are edged with hedges, trees and boundary banks. The rural character is emphasised by the absence of formal footpaths, street lights and, with some exceptions, highway clutter.

The pattern of routes across the Parish **dates back over centuries**, with most lanes present on maps from the 18th and 19th Century.

Rural lanes are an **important component of the local landscape character**, and the hedgerows which line the lanes can provide corridors for wildlife.

The generally sporadic and low density **development is not prominent** and often set back in large plots and concealed behind hedges and trees. **However, suburban style property boundaries** (e.g. close-board fencing, ornamental gates and walls, lighting, and hard surfaces) can result in the removal of hedges and trees and cumulatively have a suburbanising effect on the rural character of the lanes. A *Boundary Treatment Good Practice Guide* is included at Appendix 1.

## Policy FNP4: Rural Lanes

**A proposal for development will only be permitted where it would not result in unsympathetic change to the character of a rural lane and would have regard to the *Boundary Treatment Good Practice Guide* in Appendix 1.**

---

*Let us know if you agree or disagree with this policy, or Appendix 1, or have suggestions as to how either should be changed, and why, via the questionnaire (Questions 6 and 20).*

---

# ENVIRONMENT

## Biodiversity

Fawkham Parish has a variety of habitats and species, with:

- four designated Local Wildlife Sites making up almost 10% of the land
- almost 13% of the Parish covered by Ancient Woodland
- over 22% of the Parish swathed in woodland.

These are shown on Map 2, along with hedgerows, which shows how **hedgerows act as connections** so all areas of Ancient Woodland are connected to other areas, **creating wildlife corridors**. A wildlife corridor enables wildlife to move between otherwise isolated places for living, breeding, foraging and feeding.

**Data on species** recorded by the Kent and Medway Biological Record Centre shows Fawkham has a diverse range of species, including:

- a third of the UK BAP priority mammals (hedgehog, brown hare, dormouse, noctule bat, long-eared brown bat and soprano pipistrelle)
- half of the UK BAP priority Herptile species (reptiles and amphibians)
- several UK BAP priority bird species, including skylark, linnet, house sparrow, starling and herring gull
- 32 of Kent's rare or scarce vascular plants species including Pheasant's Eye, White Helleborine, Man Orchid and Eyebright.

**The Parish's natural assets are highly valued by residents**, as shown by the Fawkham Survey of 2019.

## Policy FNP5: Conserve and Enhance Biodiversity

**A proposal for development should protect and enhance biodiversity of the Parish by:**

- a) protecting Local Wildlife Sites, as defined on Map 2, and protected species;**
- b) preserving or enhancing linked corridors and ecological networks formed by woodland blocks, shaws and hedgerows, as defined on Map 2; and**
- c) enhancing biodiversity through net biodiversity gains associated with development with enhancements which focus on species known to be present in the Parish, and, where appropriate, priority given to the creation/restoration of species-rich grasslands, hedgerows, woodland and/or improved management of these habitats. Where new development is proposed, an appropriate depth of buffer must be provided between the development and any protected habitat. The size of that buffer shall be appropriate to safeguard the significance of that habitat and must itself create, and be maintained as, a suitable complementary natural wildlife haven.**

*Let us know if you agree or disagree with this policy, or have suggestions as to how it should be changed, and why, via the questionnaire (Question 7).*