



PARISH PRIORITY STATEMENT

Contact name: Vicki Rutt, Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

Town or Parish Council: Catsfield Parish Council

Email: clerk@catsfield-pc.gov.uk

Community Consultation

Catsfield Parish Council undertook a four-week public consultation to inform the preparation of this Parish Priority Statement (PPS).

The consultation sought to ensure that residents had the opportunity to shape the priorities for the parish over the next fifteen years. A range of engagement methods was used to maximise participation and ensure the process was accessible to all sections of the community.

These included:

- A public questionnaire available in both paper and digital formats
- Parish noticeboards
- Parish social media channels
- Email circulation lists
- Posters displayed throughout the village
- Advertisement in the local newspaper

Paper copies of the questionnaire were made available to residents without digital access, ensuring the consultation was as inclusive as possible.

A total of **31 responses** were received.

Catsfield comprises approximately **300–350 households**, meaning the consultation achieved a response rate of approximately **9–10% of households**.

Although the number of responses represents a relatively small proportion of the total population, there was a strong level of consistency across the responses received. Clear themes emerged regarding the protection of the parish's rural character, the importance of infrastructure, road safety, environmental protection and the need for carefully managed development that reflects local needs.

Strategic Priorities

The consultation identified four strategic priorities that should guide future planning decisions affecting Catsfield.

Priority 1 – Protect and Enhance the Rural Character and Natural Environment

- **Safeguard green spaces, flood plains and the High Weald landscape.**
 - *Much of the centre of Catsfield has flood drainage problems. Planning for housing must ensure that we do not build on flood risk land and that land downstream is not polluted by run off from developed areas.*
- **Protect dark skies.**
 - *The importance of dark skies when planning for lighting of housing must ensure there is no light pollution. Dark Sky is an integral feature of rural living.*
- **Prevent urbanisation and coalescence with neighbouring parishes**
 - *Planning must ensure that there is space between housing developments that ensures the character of our Village is protected from overdevelopment.*

Priority 2 – Deliver Infrastructure-Led Development and Improve Road Safety

- **Traffic calming and 20mph limits in key areas.**
 - *The main road north/south through the village is a constant safety problem for residents. Connecting rural roads, areas around the school and to the north of the village are unsafe for pedestrians. 20mph by the school when the school is open, properly maintained verge footpaths are essential if walking within the village is to be possible.*
 - *Continue to monitor and log all incidents to gather further evidence to pursue a reduction of speed limits throughout the village with a focus on known dangerous areas including the Stream and the series of bends where numerous dangerous incidents have occurred.*
- **Address flooding and drainage issues**
 - *Drains in the centre of the village regularly overflow and flood houses. (Church Road). This requires special attention to the drainage capacity and maintenance. This must also be considered when planning for new*

developments, particularly where development is proposed on areas already subject to flooding.

- **Improve broadband and mobile connectivity**
 - *Access to high-speed broadband and a working mobile phone signal is no longer a luxury it is a necessity to engage with suppliers and authorities. There are large areas in the Parish with little or no mobile coverage, land lines are being withdrawn, and broadband is reliant on slow / unstable copper wire connections. This disadvantages many residents. Future development must ensure good access not only for new builds but for all of the Parish.*
- **Ensure infrastructure capacity is addressed before development**
 - *Access to health and other services is currently limited and at capacity. The capacity for the delivery of water, the removal of wastewater is at or above capacity. The provision of communication networks is below standard. All infrastructure services must be assessed for capacity before future development is approved.*

Priority 3 – Support Small-Scale Development that Meets Local Need

- **Affordable homes for local people.**
 - *Housing that is accessible to people and families working in the Parish and to allow generation of families living in the Parish to remain in the Parish is currently unaffordable. The development of small-scale high-quality rental homes is required as part of a wider development strategy.*
 - *Small infill or modest developments within the settlement boundary. Housing in the village is all linear or of a small-scale cluster of units. This defines the character of the village. Large scale development (more than 30) does not fit within the character profile or enable social integration into village life. Development size should be limited.*
 - *High-quality, sustainable design reflecting Sussex character*

Priority 4 – Strengthen Community Wellbeing and Connectivity

- **Improve and maintain footpaths and rights of way.**
 - *This is essential to enable safe walking within the village and to allow access to housing on the periphery of the village. e.g North of the Village it is not possible to walk into the village without walking in the road.*
- **Enhance recreation and community facilities.**
 - *The recreation ground and pavilion have a limited demographic of users. Investment is needed to expand the building for a wider demographic and wider range of sport and wellness facilities.*

Development and Management of Land

What type and level of development would you like to see?

The community strongly opposes large-scale housing estates.

As mentioned in priority 3, small-scale infill within the settlement boundary. Smaller developments rather than estate type developments. Developments of modest size (generally 5–15 dwellings maximum) and affordable housing prioritised for local people.

Development should only be supported where it demonstrably meets identified local need, delivers clear community benefit, protects the landscape and environment, and is accompanied by appropriate infrastructure improvements.

New homes should:

- Meet high energy efficiency standards
- Incorporate renewable energy (e.g., solar panels, heat pumps)
- Provide adequate off-road parking (min 2 cars per home)
- Minimise external lighting to protect dark skies
- Be designed to reflect Sussex vernacular materials
- Require all new developments to deliver measurable biodiversity net gain and contribute positively to local wildlife habitats and ecological connectivity.

Are there any areas of the Parish you would like to see developed?

If development is required, it should:

- Be located within or immediately adjacent to the existing built form
- Avoid isolated greenfield sites
- Avoid land known to experience surface water flooding

Are there any specific areas you want protected for other uses?

The following areas are strongly valued and should be protected:

- Ecology and natural environment of the Normanhurst Estate and associated public footpaths
- The 1066 Walk and surrounding countryside
- Land within the High Weald National Landscape
- Flood plains and water management land
- Recreation Ground and village green spaces

- Agricultural land surrounding the village
- Woodland and mature hedgerows

Reasons for protection:

- Biodiversity value
- Flood mitigation
- Landscape character
- Community recreation
- Historic setting of the village

Areas of Local Character

Particularly important areas include:

- The central village cluster around The Green
- The White Hart pub
- St Lawrence Church
- The Village Hall
- Normanhurst Estate
- The 1066 Walk corridor
- Open grazing fields surrounding the settlement

The linear and small clustered settlement pattern is highly valued.

Particular Features of Local Character

- Sussex tile and timber boarding
- Varied, non-uniform house designs
- Hedgerow boundaries
- Dark skies and minimal street lighting
- Mature trees and historic landscape setting
- Absence of estate-style layouts

Development should reinforce village character and avoid suburban form.

Heritage Protection and the natural environment

Protect and celebrate the historic and cultural heritage of Catsfield, including its listed buildings, historic landscape, archaeological features and traditional settlement pattern.

- Protect and enhance wildlife corridors
- Plant native trees and hedgerows
- Establish wildflower verges
- Reduce mowing in selected areas
- Explore opportunities for a community nature reserve
- Establish a woodland area at the Recreation ground with the possibility of a permanent pathway half way round the Recreation ground.
- Promote community allotments or orchard
- Protect flood plains from development
- Maintain and improve footpath connectivity – *particularly footpaths leading from the recreation ground towards the north of the village where the route to Battle is located are overgrown and difficult to access.*
- Improve connectivity between different parts of the village.
- Enhance accessibility for those with mobility impairments, pushchairs and wheelchairs.
- Create safer walking routes to school, the recreation ground and village facilities.
- Maintain and improve links to Battle and neighbouring villages.

Jobs

Catsfield is a rural parish with limited commercial land.

Priorities include:

- Protecting the village shop, post office and pub
- Supporting rural businesses and farming
- Supporting home working through improved broadband and mobile signal
- Potential for small-scale markets (e.g., farmers' market)
- Small rural enterprise consistent with village character

There is no community support for industrial-scale employment development.

Public Spaces

Important green spaces include:

- Recreation Ground
- Normanhurst Estate

- Public footpaths and bridleways
- 1066 Walk
- Churchyard
- Surrounding farmland and woodland

Opportunities:

- Biodiversity enhancement
- Improved accessibility
- Potential allotment provision
- Enhanced recreation facilities (without urbanisation)

Road Safety

- 20mph limits near school and key roads
- Traffic calming measures
- Speed enforcement and regular Community Speedwatch sessions
- Safer pedestrian routes
- Improved signage and the visibility of the pedestrian crossing road markings, which have been worn away.

Roads & Drainage

- Address potholes
- Improve drainage and flood resilience
- Protect flood-prone land

Utilities

- Improved water pressure and sewage capacity
- Improved power resilience
- Removal of outdated infrastructure (e.g., lead piping where present)

Connectivity

- Faster, more reliable broadband
- Improved mobile signal

Sustainable Infrastructure

- Renewable energy on community buildings
- Energy efficiency improvements
- Dark sky compliant lighting

Residents strongly emphasised that infrastructure capacity must be addressed before significant development occurs.

Community Facilities and Social Infrastructure

- Protect and enhance the village hall, recreation ground, church and White Hart and village shop as key community assets.
- Support opportunities for new community services and activities that reduce social isolation.
- Improve facilities and activities for children, young people and older residents.
- Encourage multi-generational community spaces and activities.

Protect and strengthen community assets and facilities that contribute to village life, wellbeing and social cohesion, ensuring that Catsfield remains a vibrant and connected rural community.

Conclusion

Catsfield is a distinctive rural parish with a strong sense of place, valued landscape and active community.

Residents recognise that some change may be necessary during the Local Plan period, but that change must be carefully managed to protect the qualities that make the parish a desirable place to live and work.

The Parish Council supports development that is proportionate, sustainable and responsive to local needs, whilst ensuring that infrastructure, environmental protection and community wellbeing remain at the heart of future planning decisions.

This Parish Priority Statement provides a clear framework for achieving that vision and reflects the aspirations expressed by the community through public consultation.