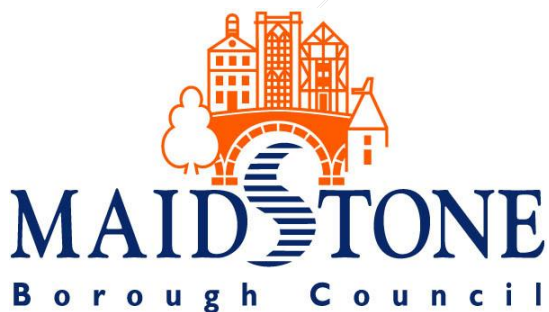

FEASIBILITY STUDY ON THE NEED FOR COMMUNITY FACILITIES IN THE NORTH WARD – MAIDSTONE.

MAY 2017



FEASIBILITY STUDY ON THE NEED FOR COMMUNITY FACILITIES IN THE NORTH WARD – MAIDSTONE.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report examines the need for the provision of community facilities in the North Ward of Maidstone. Through an examination of current supply of both facilities and services available to the local population, a detailed analysis of the profile of the resident population and its needs (Sections 4 and 5), this report sets out findings options for consideration (Section 6).

Given the lack of any policy standards, the report seeks to inform decision makers on the type of provision that could serve the needs of the residents of North Ward by examining policies, best practice and case studies (Section 3).

Section 7 provides a review of potential funding sources that could be explored in the delivery of a community facility.

Finally Sections 8 and 9 provide the overall conclusions and suggest an action plan of next steps.

Key findings from sections 4 and 5 highlight the following in relation to proving a greater understanding of the need for and nature of services and facilities at a potential community centre for north ward. These include:

Based upon the evidence gathered in support of the present study, it provides the following key findings:

Demand and Supply

- There is currently a lack of suitable community facilities in North Ward
- North Ward does not demonstrate any atypical characteristics, this suggests the need for a flexible community centre that can adapt to a wide range of need
- North Ward is a complex area with distinct sense of identity in its neighbourhoods on either side of Royal Engineers Road (A229) (e.g. Penenden Heath, Chatham Road area, Ringlestone)
- There is a large and growing population and therefore growing demand
- The housing stock is expected to grow by 24% based upon current planning permission, this will result in a similar growth in population and demand for services
- One of the key assets in the area (St Faith's Hall) is no longer fit for purpose
- Lack of GP surgery and health facilities more widely.
- Lack of youth facilities.
- Limited provision of small community halls, some linked to local churches and may be perceived as limited in use/ availability, Penenden Heath Social hall is not fit for purpose.
- Limited meeting places e.g. cafes and declining number of public houses in the area, potentially for older people to meet socially

- Limited spaces for indoor fitness sports activities
- Small but significant user groups would benefit greatly from a community centre where third part providers could deliver health care, advice, support etc. (e.g. unpaid carers especially young carers, those with long-term health conditions, young parents, non-native English speakers, lower income elderly people, lower income families).

Sites, Delivery and Management

- North Ward can be considered as distinct from the adjacent town centre area with its own identity or identities
- A229 adds to the difficulty of selecting a suitable location that can be perceived as being 'for all'
- S106 developer contributions provide an opportunity to (part) fund a community facility
- A community facility will need to involve a range of service providers and partners
- Given the lack of GPs surgeries in North Ward the community Centre should allow for a range of possible partnership opportunities with the local NHS such as screening clinics, nurse, health visitor, health advice, visiting GPs, etc. A suitable space would be required in the building.
- Re-use or conversion of existing buildings is likely to prove unsuitable
- A dedicated new build community facility appears to best suit current and future need
- Careful consideration will need to be taken in selecting a site that best suits all the community -Springfield offers greatest choice of sites
- The question of one or two community facilities needs to be explored further, notably in relation to the future development at the Maidstone Barracks site in the medium to long term.
- Transport use and travel to work data suggest the local population prefer to access services in their local area supporting a potential strong use profile for a community centre located in North Ward.
- St Faith's Church community centre aspirations provide a strong partner opportunity
- Use of allotment sites could prove highly controversial with local residents
- There is no national standard for a community facility, however best practice provides direction
- A working group and steering committee should be established to take the findings of this study forward.

This report concludes that North Way clearly presents two geographically distinct communities separated by the Royal Engineers Road (A229).

As a result this report recommends that MBC consider Option Four in the options appraisal (Section 6.3 p. 65):

“Dual site approach, requiring two community centres on either side of Royal Engineers Road A229 using a combination of MBC/ KCC owned sites”

This option could be phased as follows:

- **Short to medium term – secure a community facility on the Springfield Mill site (New build or Ragroom conversion if suitable) to meet the immediate demands of the growing community as a result of the current developments and 24% increase in total North Ward dwellings.**
- **Longer term: to seek a suitable site (to be determined) on the Penenden Heath side of Royal Engineers Way**

Further, this report recommends that the client proceeds to the next stage in the development of the project in line with Action Plan section 9.

2. INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THIS STUDY

“THE POWER OF A COMMUNITY TO CREATE HEALTH IS FAR GREATER THAN THAT OF ANY PHYSICIAN, CLINIC OR HOSPITAL”

Mark Hyman

2.1 PURPOSE

This feasibility study has been commissioned by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) to establish the need and subsequent nature of the provision of a community facility or facilities to serve the residents of North Ward in the Borough of Maidstone.

Over recent years and number of significant housing developments have been delivered in North Ward, with further ones currently under construction or in the planning stages. As a result of these developments, both the size and characteristics of the population of North Ward, and their associated needs have grown and changed. MBC has identified through the planning process the potential for increased demand for community facilities, and the services that may be accessed from these, by the local residents.

As a result, MBC has sought financial contributions from developers using Section 106 agreements: a planning obligation that aims to balance the pressure created by the new development with improvements to the surrounding area ensuring that where possible the development would make a positive contribution to the local area and community.

Key to this study are the Springfield Library S106 Clauses 5.1.1 and 5.3 and Development Securities (MOD Site) Clause 1.1 (see 3.4 below).

This study seeks to establish whether and the extent to which there is a need for a new community facility to serve the residents of North Ward and provide guidance as to the type, scale and possible location of such a facility.

2.2 SCOPE

The scope of this report is set out in the brief provided by MBC (summarized below) and answers to these questions have been provided where possible. Where it has not been possible to provide a definitive answer, this study has sought to provide guidance based upon best practice or recommend to need for further work in the next steps action plan.

The feasibility survey on the need for community facilities in the North Ward catchment sought to establish.

1. Baseline evidence base

- a. What is the definition of community facilities?
- b. What is the standard (m2 per 1000 population or equivalent) for community facilities in Maidstone?
- c. Are there particular standards that relate to different types of community facilities?
- d. What does Local Plan evidence say? – Draft Local Plan policy DM 23
- e. National policy context.

2. Supply

- a. What community facilities that are currently available in the area, including type, opening hours, floorspace, need for investment, constraints, location etc;
- b. Are there any new community facilities coming on stream in the areas and if so when?
- c. Look at the quality of existing provisions

3. Demand (need)

- a. What is current demand for community facilities in the area including how well are existing facilities used?
- b. What is the likely increase in population projected for the area?

4. Unmet need

- a. Define unmet need: demand minus supply = unmet need. To factor in quality where it has an impact on unmet need.

5. Opportunities to meet need:

- a. Existing or future potential for S106 moneys/provision of on-site facility;
- b. Other resources (Council owned land, buildings, grants);
- c. Land or buildings coming forward for development.

6. Options

- a. Establish criteria for how need should be met
- b. identify the specific site/building where community facilities might be located to meet that criteria
- c. Identify funding delivery mechanisms
- d. Establish time line for implementation

2.3 NORTH WARD - OVERVIEW

It is understood that the proposed community facility concept would potentially serve the growing population needs of the defined catchment area which currently stands at around 3,748 homes, with a further 909 under construction or planned over the next five years, and act as a key focal point and meeting place for residents. This represents an increase of 24% to the number of dwellings in North Ward and will inevitably result in the need for increased capacity for services to local residents. However, it is likely given the proposed dwelling types that any future population growth will differ from the current resident profile.

Maidstone Borough as a whole is projected to see the largest real increase in population between 2011 and 2021 increasing by +20,900 people¹.

The current developments in North Ward are:

Name	Application Reference	Number of Units
Springfield Library	12/2032	114 units
Springfield Park	16/507471	310 units
Springfield Park	05/2350	192 units
Springfield Mill	current application	293 units
Total		909 units



Springfield Park Artist's Impression

¹ www.kent.gov.uk/research Interim 2011-based Sub National Population Projections for Kent (2012)



Springfield Park Artist's Impression

The catchment area for a community covers the entirety of the North Ward of Maidstone Borough, and although the proposal may have a greater reach for some uses, any facility will be primarily intended to serve local residents. It is therefore important to present a brief profile of the ward, which indicates the following:

- According to the 2011 census, the population of North Ward was 10,210, with a high proportion of males at 53.8% compared to borough average 49.4%, average age of 36.7 is significantly lower than borough average 40.5%. 1,930 0-15 year olds and 1,230 over 65s
- Much higher than borough average BME (non-white) population 13.2% compared with 5.9% - largest non-white ethnic group is Asian/Asian British at 8.7% compared with borough average 3.2%. In addition, there is a higher rate of recent arrivals to UK than borough average: 11.8% arrived in previous 10 years compared with 5.0% for the borough as a whole. Significantly lower than borough average of residents have English as a first language at 87.2% compared with 95.1% for the borough as a whole.
- Parts of North Ward fall in the national top 20% of most deprived wards in relation to Health and Disability, Barriers to Housing and Services, Crime and Living Environment.

295 residents receive income support, 155 receive attendance allowance and 370 receive disability living allowance. There are 445 Out of work benefits claimants which is in line with borough average at 6.3% of the 16-64 population.

- Dominant housing types are terraced, semi-detached and flats, all above borough averages. Significantly lower than borough average of owner occupied households (59.6% compared with 70.5%). High rates of rented households at 37.9% compare with borough average 27.3% of which private rented are the most prevalent (20.6% of all households compared with 13.0% borough average)
- 45.8% of people are married, 14.2% cohabit, 26.5% are single, 7.9% are separated or divorced and there were 345 widowed people at the time of the published data.
- The most common employment sectors are Public Administration 16.7% (more than double the borough average 7.9%) Wholesale and retail trade 14.1%, Health and Social Work 10.5%, Construction 9.1% and education 8.8%. Demonstrating a high dependence on the public sector.
- A very high number of residents walk to their place of employment 24.1% compared to 11.6% for the borough; there is a commensurate lower use of cars/vans at 53.3% compared to 64.2% for the borough. Cycling is almost double that of the borough average. 27.1% of residents travel less than 2km to work compared to 16.0% for the borough reflecting the ward's proximity to the town centre
- The geography of North Ward is an important consideration in relation to any site choice for a community facility. The ward contains two distinct neighbourhoods which can be understood as being separated by the major trunk road, the duelled Royal Engineers Road. Such road infrastructure is considered both a physical and psychological barrier and was a main topic of the community consultation workshop.

The above serves as an introduction and context to North Ward, section 5 (below) expands on this further to highlight the types of need demonstrated by the local community, supported by qualitative information gained from a community workshop.

3 BASELINE EVIDENCE BASE

This section examines the following requirements as set out in the study brief.

1.a.	What is the definition of community facilities?
1.b.	What is the standard (m2 per 1000 population or equivalent) for community facilities in Maidstone?
1.c.	Are there particular standards that relate to different types of community facilities?
1.d.	What does Local Plan evidence say? – Draft Local Plan policy DM 23
1.e.	National policy context

3.1 DEFINING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities - also referred to as social and community infrastructure - can be defined as physical facilities for different individuals and communities, which are provided by a range of organisations (public, private and voluntary).

They typically provide for the health, welfare, social, educational, spiritual, recreational, leisure and cultural needs of the community they serve, and play an important role in the development of vibrant neighbourhoods by creating a sense of place and providing opportunities for people to meet and interact socially.

Community facilities are sometimes defined as:

- health and social care facilities (including GP surgeries, NHS walk-in centres and local care centres);
- leisure and sports facilities;
- green infrastructure and heritage assets;
- transport (including footpaths, bridleways, cycleways, highways, public transport, railways and car parks);
- community centres or meeting halls;
- youth centres;
- play facilities;
- library and information services;
- cultural facilities;
- places of worship;

- theatres, public art, heritage centres;
- public house;
- village shops;
- post offices;
- schools and other places of learning.

This list is not exhaustive, as not all activities and services need customised places to operate and local needs can change over time in nature and popularity. Importantly, communities now have the opportunity to identify a building or land which is important to their social wellbeing, and bid for it if it comes up for sale.

Clearly the guidance defining community facilities encompasses a very wide range of buildings and uses. This study does not consider many of these as core to the brief. North Ward (as we will see below) has a range of shops, pubs, places of worship, schools and so on.

Therefore, for the purposes of this study, based upon guidance and the need to provide a focused report, we will adopt the use of the term **COMMUNITY CENTRE** for the analysis from 3.4 (below).

3.2 WHY ARE COMMUNITY FACILITIES IMPORTANT?

Community facilities play an intrinsic role in the life of local communities and are crucial for economic, social and environmental sustainability of localities. The provision of community facilities is particularly important in view of factors such as ageing and growing population and a vibrant and effective third sector (charity and voluntary organisations) and faith sectors to provide the community with the services they need.

The majority of national policies on this theme are fairly strategic in their approach and so it is possible that they will not match the circumstances in every neighbourhood. The approaches set within such documents as *'Creating the Conditions for Integration'* (DCLG: 2012) and *'Opening Doors; Breaking Barriers'* (DCLG: 2012) underpin HM Government's commitment to helping communities provide and run facilities for themselves, all within the ethos of community empowerment.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) (as amended) states that local planning authorities, in preparing their development plans, must have regard to national planning policy contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in March 2012. The NPPF therefore provides the direction of travel for Local Plans and advises, among other things, that the capacity of existing infrastructure and the need for community facilities should be taken into account in the preparation of them. The document also places great emphasis on securing developments which contribute towards the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable, mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services and facilities for all members of the community.

3.3 NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

In order to gain a sound basis for the understanding of community facilities and their role for Maidstone North Ward, it is important to examine how this question is addressed in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

'Community' and 'community facilities' are addressed under NPPF Section 8 where the focus is clearly on the communities themselves and their outcomes, *as opposed to physical buildings and other infrastructure*.

Guidance therefore relates to what makes a community healthy and how this might be achieved. This is beneficial to local planning authorities as this less prescriptive approach allows local decision makers, officers and fundamentally the communities themselves, to work together to deliver appropriate local responses to their needs.

Key concepts and tools include:

- Facilitating social interaction
- Safe and accessible environments

- Safe and accessible developments

The relevant paragraphs of NPPF Section 8 (69-71, 74) are set out below:

69. *The planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. Local planning authorities should create a shared vision with communities of the residential environment and facilities they wish to see. To support this, local planning authorities should aim to involve all sections of the community in the development of Local Plans and in planning decisions, and should facilitate neighbourhood planning. Planning policies and decisions, in turn, should aim to achieve places which promote:*

- *opportunities for meetings between members of the community who might not otherwise come into contact with each other, including through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres and active street frontages which bring together those who work, live and play in the vicinity*
- *safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion*
- *safe and accessible developments, containing clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas.*

70. *To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:*

- *plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments*
- *guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs*
- *ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community*
- *ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services*

71. *Local planning authorities should take a positive and collaborative approach to enable development to be brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order, including working with communities to identify and resolve key issues before applications are submitted.*

74. *Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:*

- *an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements*
- *the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location*
- *the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.²*

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/8-promoting-healthy-communities>

3.4 DRAFT LOCAL PLAN POLICY DM23

In addition to examining what national planning policy tells us about community and community facility provision this section examines MBC's Draft Local Plan. As the planning policy relevant to North Ward, the Local Plan.

Policy DM 23 Community facilities

The adequate provision of community facilities, including social, education and other facilities, is an essential component of new residential development.

1. Residential development which would generate a need for new community facilities or for which spare capacity in such facilities does not exist, will not be permitted unless the provision of new, extended or improved facilities (or a contribution towards such provision) is secured by planning conditions or through legal agreements unless the specific facilities are identified for delivery through the Community Infrastructure Levy.
2. Proposals which would lead to a loss of community facilities will not be permitted unless demand within the locality no longer exists or a replacement facility acceptable to the council is provided.
3. The council will seek to ensure, where appropriate, that providers of education facilities make provision for dual use of facilities in the design of new schools, and will encourage the dual use of education facilities (new and existing) for recreation and other purposes.³

DM 23.1 is key to the objectives of the present study in so far as it relates to the impact of new developments on community facilities. The use of S106 or Community Infrastructure Levy to fund the development of new community facilities is a key tool at the disposal of MBC in providing the services that can meet the needs of the community.

Regulation 19 Maidstone borough Local Plan

Regulation 19 modifications to the Maidstone Borough Local Plan refers to community facilities primarily under MM48 as follows "Sustainability of the site and its settlement will be a prime consideration in decision making. The council will give preference to settlements and communities

³ Main Modifications:

<https://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s53581/Appendix%20I%20Schedule%20of%20Main%20Modifications%20to%20the%20Submitted%20Local%20Plan.pdf>

Minor Modifications:

<https://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s53584/Appendix%20III%20Final%20Schedule%20of%20Minor%20Changes.pdf>

where a range of community facilities and services, in particular school, health, and shopping are accessible from the site preferably on foot, by cycle or on public transport.”⁴



⁴ Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the Regulation 19 Maidstone Borough Local Plan March 2017

3.5 TOWARDS A STANDARD FOR COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community centres are places in which people meet, participate in activities, access advice and information, find enjoyment and have the opportunity to develop group activities with like-minded people. They are provided to enable local people to become involved in planning and operating activities that can affect their lives educationally, socially and culturally and contribute towards thriving communities.

Apart from private events such as weddings and birthday parties, community centres are typically booked by numerous community groups that offer their services to residents. These service providers range from Community and Enterprise Groups, Age Concern to Nursery Groups and many others. The centres can also be used by elected councillors for ward surgeries; these meetings are a platform for residents to come and air any concerns they may have through leaders who shape services offered within their ward or neighbourhood.⁵

Community Centres play an increasingly important role in bringing local communities together as recognised in the NPPF 'Healthy Communities'⁶. They offer a focal point for neighbourhood activities and a base for local groups. Councils often work in partnership with volunteers and trusts that are responsible for the management of all these facilities, which gives local people a genuine role to determine and realise the sort of services and activities they need for themselves.

This study has reviewed NPPF and the MBC Draft Local Plan and concludes that there is no agreed, defined standard for a community facility or community centre.

A further indication of the 'standard' for a community facility can be gained by examining the Springfield Library S106 Clause 5.3 which states:

Clause 5.11 "the Council shall expend the Community Facilities Sum on the improvement renewal replacement and maintenance of a community facility such as a hall within a one mile radius of the Land"

"that the Community Facility will be not less than two hundred (200) square metres in area and will be provided to shell finish"

This gives a clear indication as to both location, size and finish of a new community facility for North Ward.

In addition, Development Securities S106 (MOD site) states the definition of "Community Facility" in clause 1.1 of the Agreement shall be:

"Community Facility means a community meeting facility and creche area to be provided within the ground floor of the retail unit of the Development or such other community facility which directly serves the occupants of the Development;"

This adds both the concept of a crèche and suggests that the ground floor may serve as a community facility *or*, significantly 'other community facility'. This suggests that contribution to a distinct building may be available.

⁵ <https://www.slough.gov.uk/leisure-parks-and-events/activities-at-our-community-centres.aspx>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/8-promoting-healthy-communities>

Both of the S106 agreements provide useful components to the definition of a community facility serving the existing residents of North Ward and those who will occupy dwellings in the new developments.

Rather than adopting a “one size fits all” standard, community centres appear to reflect the communities, in which they are found, embodying the spirit of NPPF 8.69 (above):

Local planning authorities should create a shared vision with communities of the residential environment and facilities they wish to see.

Therefore in order to understand better what the community of North Ward can expect, this study will examine examples of community centres to provide an indication as to the:

- **Range of services offered**
- **Scale of the facilities**
- **Mix of rooms and support facilities**
- **Typical opening hours**
- **Management arrangements**

This is addressed by examining examples of ‘best practice’ community centres in section 4 below.

4 ASSESSING THE SUPPLY

“WE HAVE ALL KNOWN THE LONG LONLINESS, AND WE HAVE FOUND THAT THE ANSWER IS COMMUNITY”

Dorothy Day

This section examines the following requirements as set out in the study brief.

2.a.	What Community facilities are currently in the area?
2.b.	Are there any new community facilities coming on stream in the area?
2.c.	What is the quality of current provision?

4.1 NORTH WARD COMMUNITY FACILITIES

We saw in section 2 that ‘community facilities’ in NPPF can cover a broad range of service delivery buildings. In this section we present a brief review by NPF category of these as they relate to North Ward at the time of writing.

Health and social care facilities

These include GP surgeries, NHS walk-in centres and local care centres. Currently North Ward does not have a GP’s surgery situated within in the ward nor does it have a walk-in centre or similar. The nearest such facilities are to be found at Brewer St Surgery, Albion Place Medical Practice and Grove Green Medical Centre.

A pharmacy is situated on Boxley Road and North Lodge Dental on Heathfield Rd is the nearest site for dentistry services.

Leisure, sports, green infrastructure and heritage assets

The most notable sports facility in North Ward is the Gallagher Stadium, home of Maidstone United Football Team. It is a relatively new 4,200 capacity football stadium which officially opened on 14 July 2012. The stadium also houses the main building which holds the club’s office/reception, the

Spitfire Lounge (clubhouse), classrooms for the club's academy side, the boardroom, changing rooms, a physio room and storage rooms.



The Gallagher Stadium

North Ward has a number of green open spaces including Taylor Park and adjacent allotments bordered by Albert St, Penenden Heath which offers play area, pavilion toilets, football pitches, tennis courts and bowling greens. In addition the River walk along the river Medway allows access to a 10km riverside walking route and, although not in North Ward, but very close by, Whatman Park offers many leisure opportunities, a large adventure play area and a skate park. Additionally the river offers opportunities for boating, rowing, canoeing and angling.



Penenden Heath site plan



Whatman Park Play Area



River Medway Boat Trip near Springfield Mill

The former Whatman Paper Mill at Springfield, which is subject to a new housing development application for 263 units presents one of the area's most significant heritage assets with 3 grade 2 listed structures including the chimney, engine beam and ragroom.



Engine Beam with Ragroom to the rear



Inside of the Ragroom



The Paper Mill Chimney undergoing resoration

North Ward contains the Cob Tree Museum of Kent Life which is an open air museum on 28 acre site focused on the history of Kent through its food production and farming heritage. It offers conference and meetings facilities and a café in addition to it many preserved buildings and museum exhibits. This is a paid attraction and is specifically marketed as a visitor attraction and is only marginally of use for the immediate local community.

North Ward is well provided for allotments, with 3 sites:

- Sandling Road, the largest allotment in Maidstone with 140 plots

- Sandling lane, 42 plots
- James Street 6 plots



Sandling Road Allotment looking towards Springfield

Community centres or meeting halls

There are four primary venues that fit in this category, these are;

St Faith's Church Hall, Ringlestone. This has been the main community centre in the area for 80 years but is no longer considered fit for purpose by its management and has been the subject of significant redevelopment planning. This will be explored in more detail in section X below



St Faith's Hall

Penenden Heath Social Hall. A small sectional concrete hall that primarily serves as home to Penenden Heath Pre School. This facility is of a poor standard and meets few of the criteria for a community centre.



Penenden Heath Social Hall

In addition, St Paul's Church offer meeting rooms for hire to local people and groups, a main hall (£25/hour) and small hall (£20/hour).



St Paul's large and small halls

Youth centres

There are no youth centres in North Ward.

Library and information services, cultural facilities

North Ward is home to a very significant community facility, namely the Kent History and Library Centre. It was opened on the 23rd April 2012 and is described by Kent County Council as "purpose built to protect and give people access to more of our archive material, and to provide a 21st century library in the heart of Kent". In addition it has a community history area, archive search room, digital studio, free public internet access and wifi, and a large space for displays and events as well as a children's library and as such offers a significant community facility in North Ward.



Kent History and Library Centre main entrance



Main library area

Archive research room

Public houses

NPPF considers public houses as community facilities, recognising their role in bringing people together socially. There is a wide range of public houses serving the area including large pubs with restaurant facilities (e.g. the White Rabbit or The Running Horse) or smaller, traditional pubs (e.g. The Greyhound, The Dog and Gun or the Brickmakers Arms). Like many areas, a number of local pubs have been closed down in recent years some converted to residential use.

Local shops and Post offices

There is a range of small local shops serving the area and an Aldi supermarket in close proximity.

There are post offices situated on Chatham Road and Sandling Rd.

Schools and other places of learning

North Ward has a range of schools and preschools, although these only serve children up to year 6. The impact of 909 new housing units on the ward is the statutory responsibility of Kent County Council. Schools and pre-schools include: St Paul's Infant School, North Borough Junior School,

Sandling Primary School, Alphabet Children's Nursery, Little monsters Pre-school and Penenden Heath Preschool.



St Paul's Infant School



North Borough Junior School

4.2 SO WHAT IS A COMMUNITY CENTRE?

A community centre is a public location in which members of a specific community can come together as a group to enjoy group activities, social support, public information and many other purposes that will with enrich the lives of citizens.

Community centres are generally open for the whole community or for a specialised group within the community, for example a Christian community centre, an Islamic community centre, a Jewish community centre or for various youth-related projects.

Many of the community centres across the UK have their own building in which these activities are based, however one can be based in a school or other building such as a church.

A community centre endeavours to tackle problems such as poor health, loneliness, access to learning and employment, racism, sexism, crime and violence through enriching people's lives and occupying their time with many activities that bring together large diversities of people from within the community.

Activities in a social community centre can vary from music/dance activities, sport activities, social support activities, coffee mornings, fundraisers for charities and the community centre, child care and many other different things to enjoy.

With increasing understanding of the link between isolation or loneliness and poor mental health, a community centre provides a unique resource to meet with people and making new friends, as well as providing learning opportunities and improving quality of life.

A community centre is normally located within the locality it seeks to serve and should be within easy walking distance or bus routes so they are easily accessible for as many people as possible.

4.3 PARTICIPATION AND BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITIES

Participation is key to making community facilities work. They are often the hub or base from which people *volunteer community services*, such as working with less fortunate people or maybe disabled people, providing companionship and support on an informal level.

A lot of other community services are concerned with simply improving the look of the community, by clearing litter or by planting flowers and trees. Many people also offer their community services by cleaning up graffiti or by tidying streets. Community services such as this are available for anybody to get involved in.

Many members of the community offer different community services such as neighbourhood watch. This can help keep crime levels low and make you feel safe. Other community services include careers counselling and job centres, as well as a variety of social clubs, childcare venues and counselling facilities.

Community services can also unlock potential and skills such as:⁷

- Developing inspiring projects that bring together residents, small groups and local businesses.
- Engaging residents in the development of services and activities that encourage participation and engagement.
- Working with residents in most need of support to improve social and economic engagement.
- Supporting the development of community-led activities to improve local environments.
- Motivating local residents and businesses to become more involved through volunteering.
- Equipping local residents with the skills and motivation to improve their life chances.⁸

⁷ <http://www.community.org.uk/communityservices/>

⁸ <http://www.octopuscommunities.org.uk/our-projects/community-hubs/the-importance-of-community-centres/>

4.4 COMMUNITY CENTRES FOR LEARNING

Community centres provide an alternative learning environment to more formal centres of learning such as colleges.

Community centres provide a wide range of activities that are intended to meet the needs of the local community and improve their confidence, skills and employment prospects. These activities include educational learning opportunities whereby local people can gain a new skill or find out ways of helping their children. Examples of educational provision include family learning, employability training and computer skills. Some centres also provide a range of innovative taster sessions, family fun days, summer courses, arts and craft courses and drop in sessions.

The community centre provides a friendly, informal learning environment. The provision is intended to break down barriers and widen participation. They may work with partner organisation such as schools, libraries, children's centres and voluntary organisations to deliver a range of learning opportunities and to attract a range of different learners. Many centres aim to meet the needs of learners of all ages with provision for under-fives through to opportunities for the over 65s. These centres can be said to be embodying the concept of Lifelong Learning.

Benefits of Informal Learning

Community centres provide the sense of informality for several reasons:

- The classes are local to the learners' homes
- The centre, and possibly staff, may already be known to the learners
- There is a shared sense of community as learners share local knowledge
- Classes are often smaller than those in colleges
- Centres often have crèche provision onsite
- Going to the local community centre may feel less like going back to school than attending college

Links to government policy

In their 2007 document the previous government's Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills stated that pre L2 learning and provision is one of their priorities. Targets for 2020 included:

- 95% of adults should have functional literacy and numeracy skills
- Over 90% of adults should be qualified to at least L2

They recognised that adults lacking skills are more likely to feel excluded from society but that these people are unlikely to attend formal learning in colleges. Community centres might provide a way of attracting these reluctant learners.

Geoff Russell, Chief Executive of the Skills Funding Agency, said: "Skills should be at the heart of every community [...] the most disadvantaged groups of adults take their first steps to learning new skills, sparking their interest in learning as a way to improving their prospects."

Every Citizen Matters

The ethos of community learning also fits closely with the outcomes of Every Citizen Matters:

- Stay safe
- Be healthy
- Enjoy and achieve
- Economic well being
- Make a positive contribution

Typical courses in community centres include healthy eating and financial literacy courses. The positive contribution outcome links strongly with community learning and make a tangible contribution to a strong sense of identity and citizenship.



4.5 COMMUNITY CENTRE CASES STUDY

In this section, we have sought to define both type of building and range of services and activities that a community centre may offer residents. To provide a better understanding of how this translates in real projects, we examine two examples of existing community centres that have been selected because their capacity and range of services are a population of similar size to that of North Ward.

Both of the examples below serve a similar size of population as that in North Ward (over 10,000). Each example offer a different approach to providing a community centre, the first a re-use of an existing building, the second a purpose-built community centre. These serve as examples of a range and type of community centres.

4.5.1 COLCHESTER: THE HYTHE COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Hythe Community Centre serves the residents of New Town ward in Colchester and is similar to North Ward as it is an urban area peripheral to the town centre. The size of the population is also similar to North Ward: in the 2011 census the population of New Town was 10,682 and is made up of approximately 46% females and 54% males. The average age of people in New Town is 33

The centre is a modern and welcoming multi-purpose community centre It is managed by The Hythe Community Centre Association, a small, local charitable organisation whose aim is to work for the benefit of the residents of Hythe and New Town.

The Centre is a two storey fully accessible building, and is located on a bus and train route to/from the town centre including a private free car park and over flow car park. It offers a varied choice of rooms, each with their own kitchen facilities, additional storage, disabled facilities, baby changing and toilets on each floor.



It offers 3 main rooms suited to children's parties, wedding receptions, anniversaries business meetings and a range of meetings:

The *Colne Room* accommodates up to 90 people and has its own kitchen facilities and toilets. The room is 12.55m long by 7.4m wide.



The Oyster room accommodates up to 30 people. The room is 7.75m long x 5.89m wide and has access to a fully equipped kitchen.



The Harbour Room is smaller self-contained meeting/training room for 12-15 people and access to own kitchen and toilets, it is 6.96m long and 4.88m wide

4.5.2 LENHAM COMMUNITY CENTRE

Lenham Community Centre is situated in Maidstone Borough and serves as an example of a purpose-built and well-used community centre. Lenham Community centre was opened on the 12th February 2004 at a cost of £830,00. Its development was led by the parish council and a range of local partners.

The community centre's purpose is clearly in line with national guidance and best practice, and is "for the use of the inhabitants of the Parish of Lenham and the neighbourhood without distinction of sex or of political, religious or other opinions and in particular for use for meetings lectures and classes and for other forms of recreation and leisure time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life of the said inhabitants."

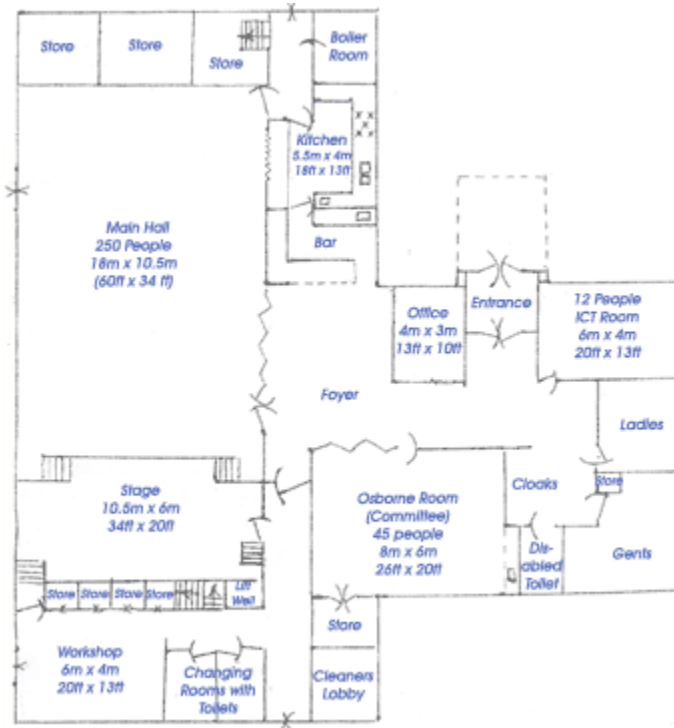


Lenham Community Centre is available for hire and offers with concessions for charities, local organisations and youth groups. There is a licensed bar and fully equipped kitchen as well as chairs and tables.

The key facilities of the community centre are:

- Main Hall seating 200 with stage
- Committee Room seating approximately 45
- Office seating up to 4 people
- Large Foyer and Reception Area
- IT Room for 10 people
- Kitchen
- Bar Area
- Changing Rooms

- Sound and Lighting Control Room
- Patio Area
- Ample Car Parking
- Lighting and Security Systems
- Internal PA System
- Hearing Loop
- Wheelchair Access to all areas



Plan of Lenham Community Centre

4.7 SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY CENTRE CHARACTERISTICS

As discussed above, the research revealed no standard as to the physical nature of community centre buildings, rather, all policy and guidance focuses on the range nature and quality of services delivered to the community and the outcomes.

To provide guidance in this study as to any scale and nature of a community centre for North Ward, this study examined a range of 28 community centres/ halls in Maidstone Borough and focused on three more detailed examples from outside the area.

The purpose of this was to begin establishing a pattern of facilities (management/ governance, size, range of rooms, facilities and where possible building costs) to provide guidance to inform the next stage of development following this report.

Management and governance arrangements

In the changing landscape of community facility provision since the Localism Act 2011, there has a shift away from community centres being directly delivery and managed by local authorities and a subsequent increase in the variety of governance arrangements.

These have typically included some form of community ownership or responsibility through a lease with key characteristics summarised below:

- Many are owned by local authorities, trusts/ charities or churches.
- Often small core staff (e.g. manager, admin/ finance assistant) supported by volunteers or specialist staff shared with other facilities (e.g. maintenance/ caretaker)
- Management typically overseen by a board of trustees made up of a range of stakeholders.
- Funding can be from local authority, developer contributions, income generation, sponsorship, grant/ project funding, loans (e.g. Public Works Loan Board).
- Activities/ services are generally self-funding (commercial e.g. weight loss groups, parties, sports clubs) or provided directly by local partners e.g. CCGs, social services, colleges, etc.

Facilities/ building

There are many and varied combinations of rooms and facilities that are typically found in community centres, however the summary below highlights those which are often core to those serving larger communities of a size comparable to that of North Ward.

- Cafeteria open to the public
- A large hall (capacity average 200 people standing/150 seated) sometimes which has parquet/ dance flooring, a stage and licensed bar (often important for income generation for evening functions)
- A smaller hall is suitable for children's activities or creche and birthdays, sometimes with flooring suitable for 'soft play' and underfloor heating (approx. 50 people)
- A range of Meeting rooms (various capacities small to medium)
- An I.T suite/ resources room
- 1-2-1 Health/ Consultation room(s)

- Fenced garden for young children accessible for creche-type activities
- Audio visual and communications infrastructure (public address system, projectors/screen, wifi, etc)
- Hearing loop
- Disabled access
- Toilets (inc disabled and baby changing facilities)
- Kitchen, fridge and freezer, microwave, cooker, cutlery and crockery; (part of the hiring fee).

Opening Hours

Community centres by their nature and range of services often have long, continuous opening hours. They are generally available to let for private functions, weddings and children's parties.

Typical opening hours

- Monday to Friday 8.00am - 10.30pm
- Saturday 9am - midnight for functions
- Sunday 9am - 9pm

Parking

Parking is generally considered very important for access even in urban areas with good walking and public transport links to allow for greatest access to disabled, elderly, parents with young children and safety considerations such as late evening events. Centres would require good provision of disabled parking bays. Number of spaces, however varies considerable from as low as 8 to as many as 100.

Parking Standards are provided by The Planning Service, although there are no specific classes that are 'community centres' the standard for *No Specific Class 'Sui Generis'* is set out below

Churches and Church Halls

1 space per 3 seats Churches shall have a minimum of 1 coach space

Minimum of 10 per unit

Activities: typical range

Community Centres offer a very wide range of services and activities that reflect the need of the local area they serve including; social activities, health and lifestyle, learning and skills, sports and leisure, the arts.

The range of required services should help define the design of a new community facility, or any design should build in this need for flexibility.

Groups typically catered for include children and young people, young parents/ families, older people, faith groups and BME residents.

Below is an alphabetical summary list of services and activities offered at the community centres reviewed in support of this report.

- 50+ Friendship Club
- Aerobics
- Associations (residents, faith groups, etc)
- Badminton Club
- Beavers/ Cubs/ Scouts
- Childrens' Gymnastic Club
- Credit Union
- Dance Schools
- Drama groups
- FE College courses – outreach
- Fitness classes
- Health services e.g. Nurse, Chiropodist
- IT/ computing
- Hula hoop dancing
- Karate
- Keep Fit for over 60s
- Kick boxing
- Language/ conversation groups for non-native English speakers
- Learning Zone
- Lunch Club for Senior Citizens
- Lunch clubs
- Mixed Martial Arts
- Music performance and rehearsal
- Pilates
- Prayer Groups (all faiths)
- Pre-school clubs
- Private functions (birthdays, anniversaries, wedding receptions, etc)
- Uniformed associations Beavers/ Cubs/ Scouts/ Rainbows/ Brownies/ Guides
- Senior Citizen's Bingo Club
- Sequence/Old Time/Ballroom dancing
- Stopping smoking groups
- Sunday School
- Support groups (e.g. Speech Therapy group for Stroke Survivors people suffering from Parkinson's Disease and MS)
- Table Tennis Clubs
- Tai-chi
- Various arts, creative groups/ tuition
- Women's Institute
- Weight loss groups
- Weight Watchers

5 UNDERSTANDING NORTH WARD AND DEMAND

This section examines the following requirements as set out in the study brief.

3.a.	What is the demand for community facilities in the area?
3.b.	What is the likely increase in population projected for the area?
4	Define unmet need

In order to address these questions is necessary to review the key characteristics of North Ward as we understand it today from both published quantitative data sources and qualitative data from the community workshop.

By analysing such data we will attempt to prioritise the largest groups of people likely to call upon a community centre, and the types of services that would best serve their needs.

It is, however, important to note that it is not possible to speculate upon the needs of any future population in the new developments as we cannot know who will live there.

This section present summary findings from the analysis of an extensive range of official statistics and CACI data commissioned by MBC. The full data and analysis are provided in appendix (XX)

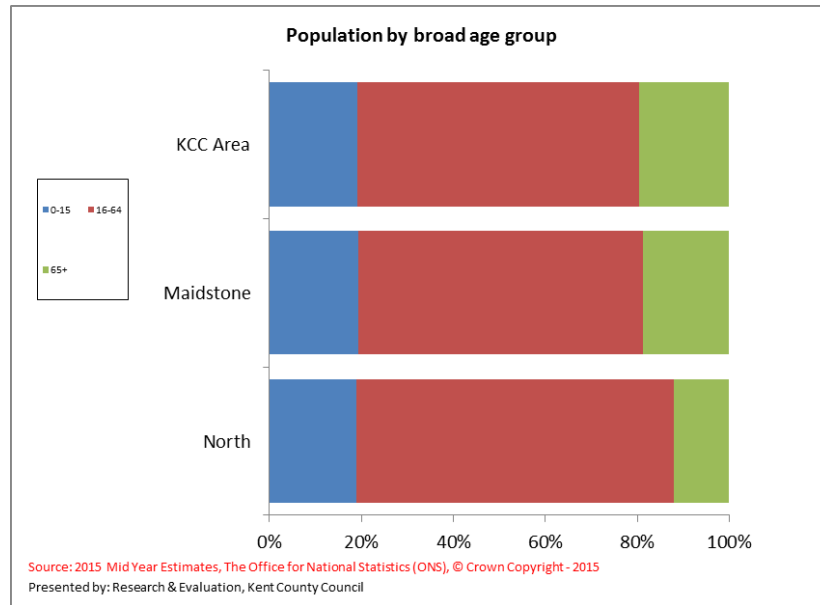
This section does not claim to be an exhaustive statistical analysis of North Ward, but does highlight key characteristics where these are relevant to our understanding of the demand for a community centre.

All 'base' data refer to Maidstone Borough.

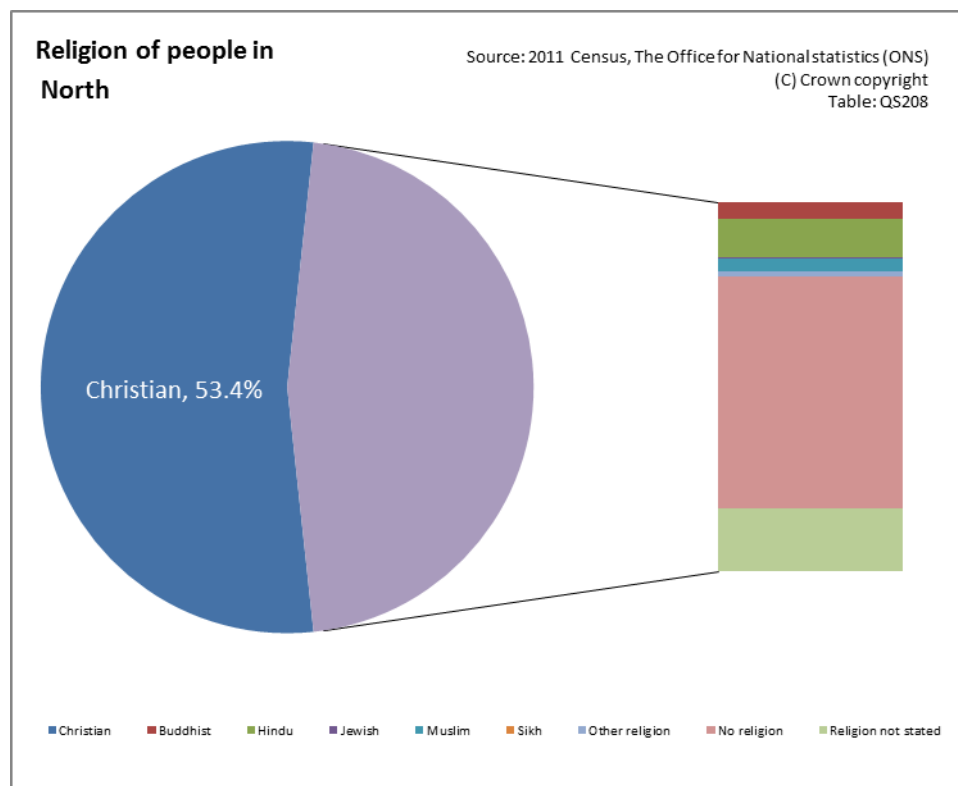
Finally, this section reviews its findings in relation to those of Section 4 (above) and proposes a 'Need Profile' for a possible community centre in North Ward.

5.1 DEMOGRAPHY, EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMY

- Total population 10,210, high proportion of males at 53.8% compared to borough average 49.4%
- 1,930 0-15 year olds and 1,230 over 65s
- Average age of 36.7 is significantly lower than borough average 40.5%
- 1,700 residents are aged 60 or over with 360 aged 80 or above



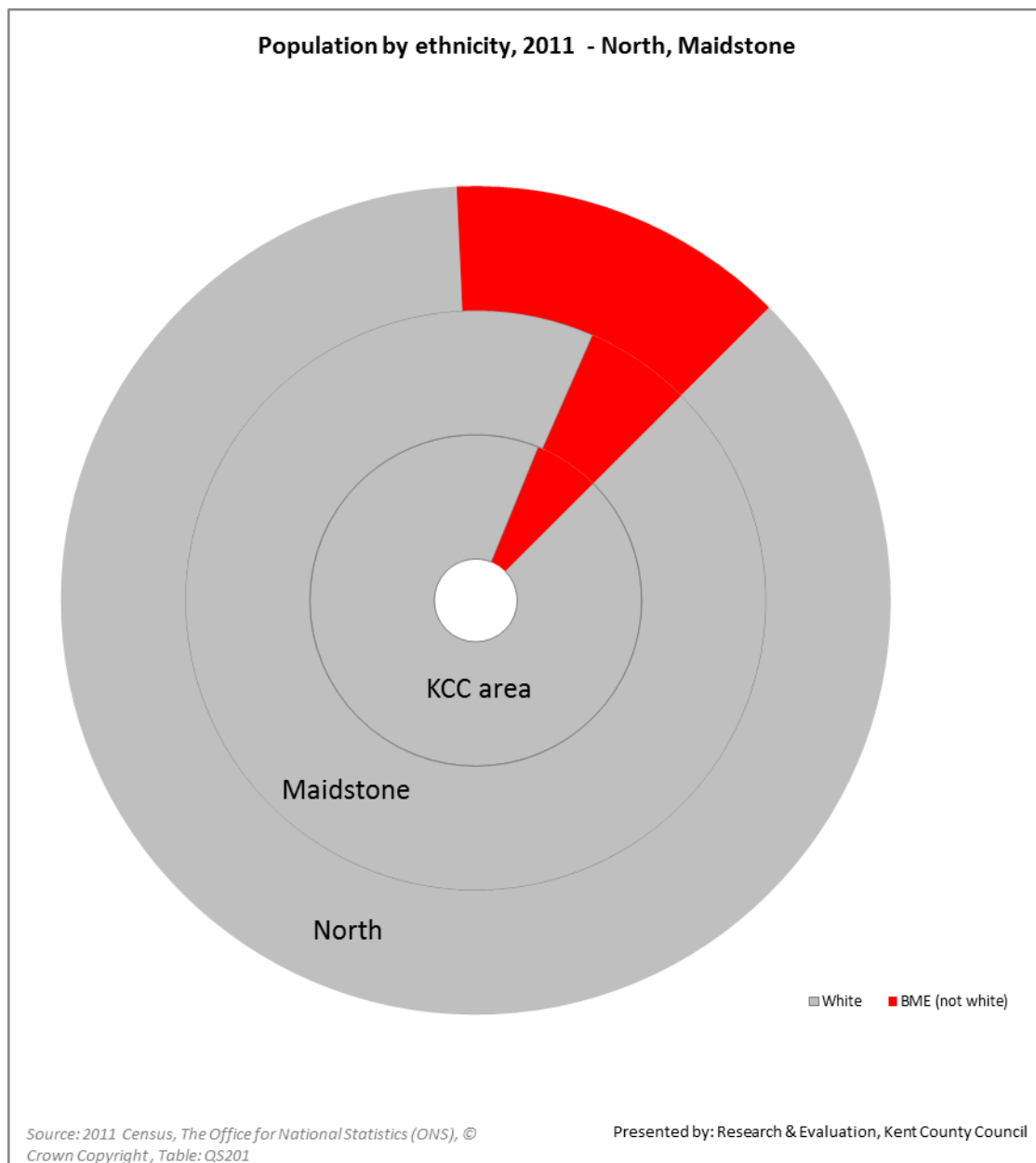
Much higher than borough average Hindu residents (4.8% compared with 1.0%) most represented religion Christian (53.4% compared with borough average 62.9%)



Significantly higher recent arrivals to UK than borough average: 11.8% arrived in previous 10 years compared with 5.0% for the borough.

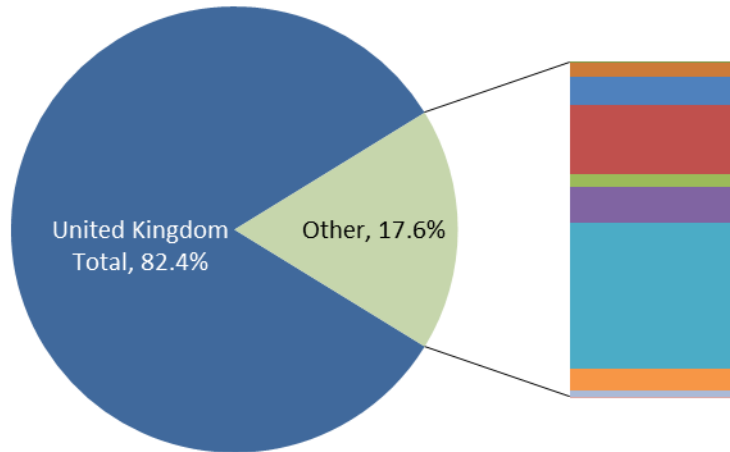
Significantly lower than borough average of residents have English as a first language at 87.2% compared with 95.1% for the borough as a whole

Much higher than borough average BME (non-white) population 13.2% compared with 5.9% - largest non-white ethnic group is Asian/Asian British at 8.7% compared with borough average 3.2%



Country of birth of residents in North

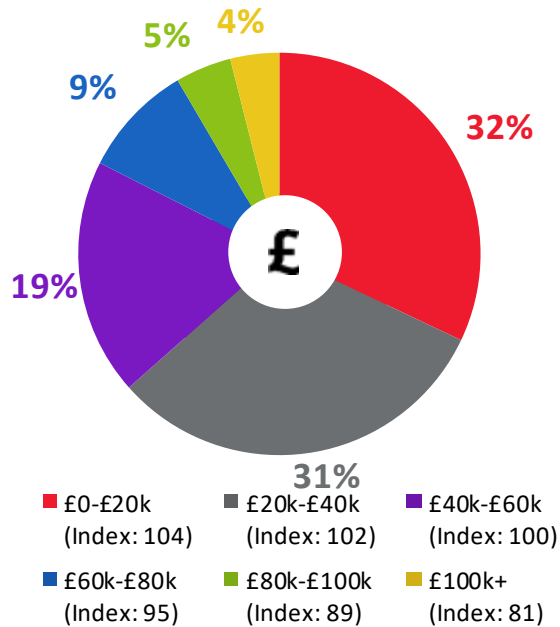
Source: 2011 Census, The Office for National Statistics (ONS), © Crown Copyright
Table: QS203



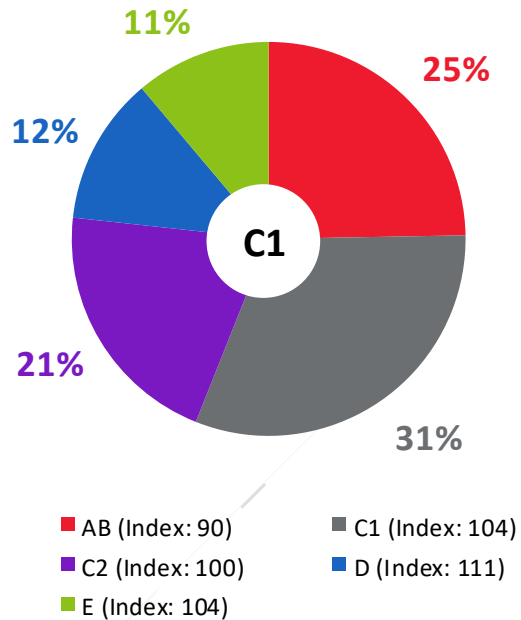
- United Kingdom Total
- Jersey
- Isle of Man
- Other EU - Members in March 2001
- Rest of Europe
- Middle East & Asia
- Antarctica & Oceania
- Guernsey
- Channel Islands (other)
- Ireland
- Other EU - Accession Countries (April 2001 to March 2011)
- Africa
- The Americas & Caribbean
- Other

Presented by: Research & Evaluation, Kent County Council

INCOME

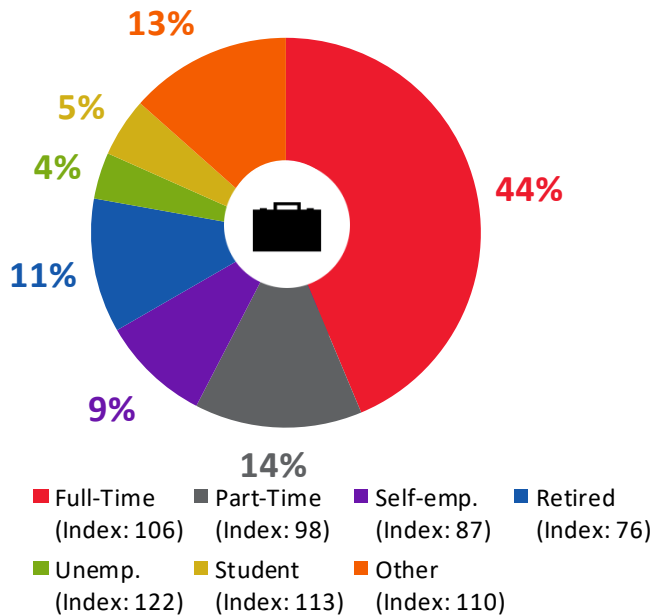


SOCIAL GRADE



- Youth unemployment closely mirrors borough averages however the rate for young females is 2.2% compare with borough averaged of 1.4%.
- 4,800 residents are in employment of which 69.5% are full time and 30.5% part-time.
- 641 residents are self-employed or 8.8% of the economically active population compared to 11.3% for the borough.
- The most common employment sectors are Public Administration 16.7% (more than double the borough average 7.9%) Wholesale and retail trade 14.1%, Health and Social Work 10.5%, Construction 9.1% and education 8.8%. Demonstrating a high dependence on the public sector.
- Average unemployment since 2009 has been low reflecting borough trends but has been consistently higher than the borough average e.g. 2.8% compared with 2.5% in 2009 and 1.3% compared with 1.2% in 2015.
- Qualifications levels compare closely to borough averages with the borough.
- The most common employment sectors are Public Administration 16.7% (more than double the borough average 7.9%) Wholesale and retail trade 14.1%, Health and Social Work 10.5%, Construction 9.1% and education 8.8%. Demonstrating a high dependence on the public sector.

EMPLOYMENT



KEY INSIGHTS

- The average age of the population in the profiled households is younger when compared to the base.
- Households containing singles with no children occur more in this profile than in the base.
- 32.1% of the profile live in households with an income less than £20k.
- The dominant Social Grade is C1 and the most over-represented
- There is a higher proportion of people in this profile who are unemployed than in the base.

5.3 TRANSPORT AND HOUSING

Maidstone North has good transport links and is situated within easy walking distance of Maidstone town centre. The area is close to two motorways, the M20 and the M2. It is under a five minutes' drive from the M20 junction 6 and is ten minutes from the M2 junction 3. North Ward is also well served by rail connecting it to London, other parts of Kent and the wider South East, and is a five-minute walk from Maidstone East railway station (Maidstone East Line), and is also within walking distance of both Maidstone Barracks and Maidstone West stations (Medway Valley Line). In addition, area is well served by regular local bus services.

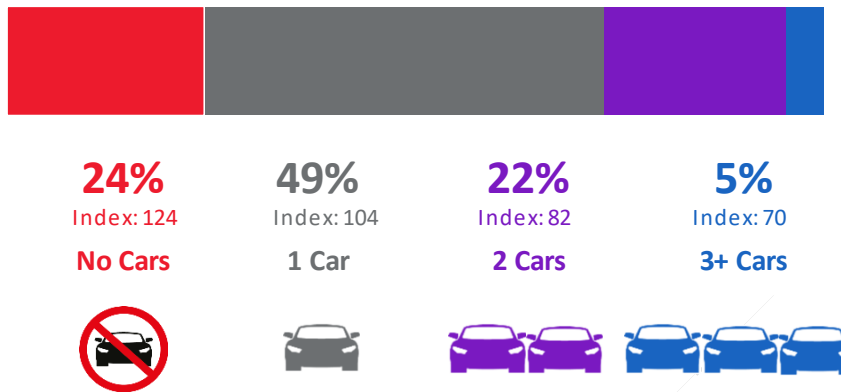
The geography of North Ward is an important consideration in relation to any site choice for a community facility. The ward contains two distinct neighbourhoods which can be understood as being separated by the major trunk road, the duelled Royal Engineers Road. Such road infrastructure is considered both a physical and psychological barrier and was a main topic of the community consultation workshop.

A very high number of residents walk to their place of employment 24.1% compared to 11.6% for the borough; there is a commensurate lower use of cars/vans at 53.3% compared to 64.2% for the borough. Cycling is almost double that of the borough average.

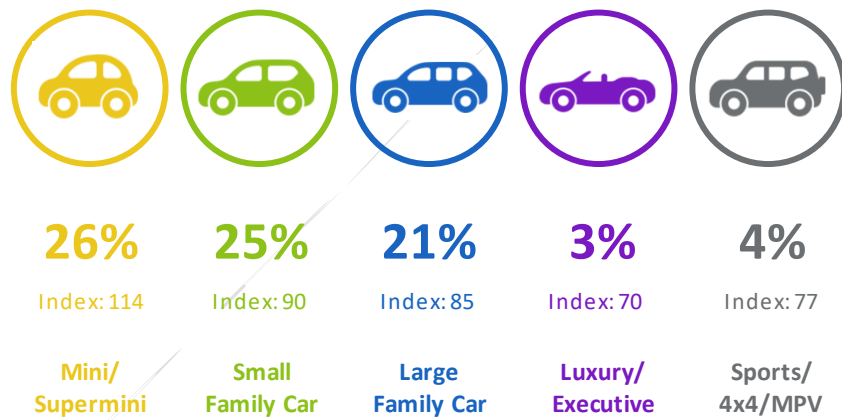
27.1% of residents travel less than 2km to work compared to 16.0% for the borough reflecting the ward's proximity to the town centre.

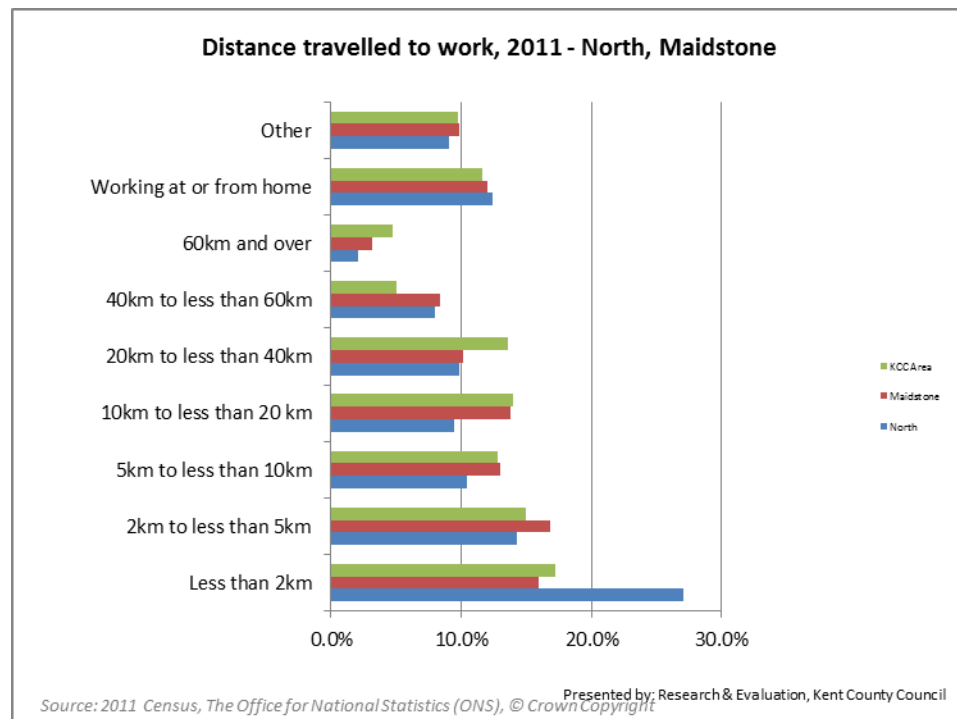
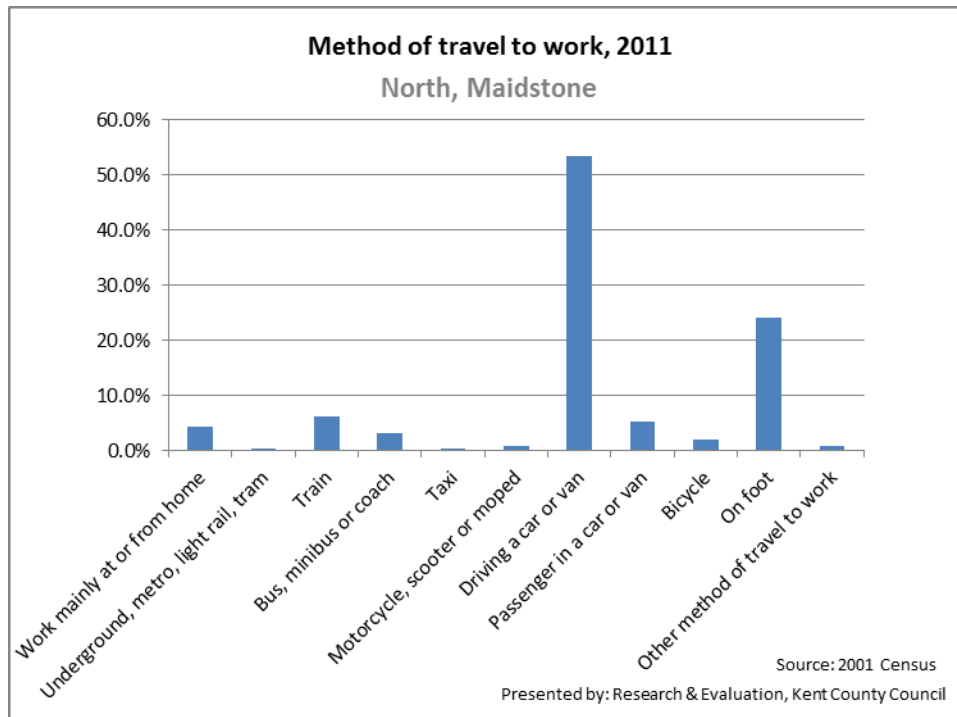
687 (19.0%) of households have no car.

CARS



CAR TYPE





There are 3,748 dwellings in North Ward.

Dominant housing types are terraced, semi-detached and flats, all above borough averages.

There are significantly lower than base owner occupied households (59.6% compared with 70.5%).

High rates of rented households at 37.9% compared with the base 27.3% of which private rented are the most prevalent (20.6% of all households compared with 13.0% borough average)

The most common council tax band is C at 36.7% compared with 27.2% for the borough.

TENURE



27%
Index: 82

**Owned
Outright**

23%
Index: 138

**Private
Rented**

34%
Index: 100

**Owned
Mortgage**

15%
Index: 101

**Social
Rented**

SIZE



1 Person 18%
Index: 103

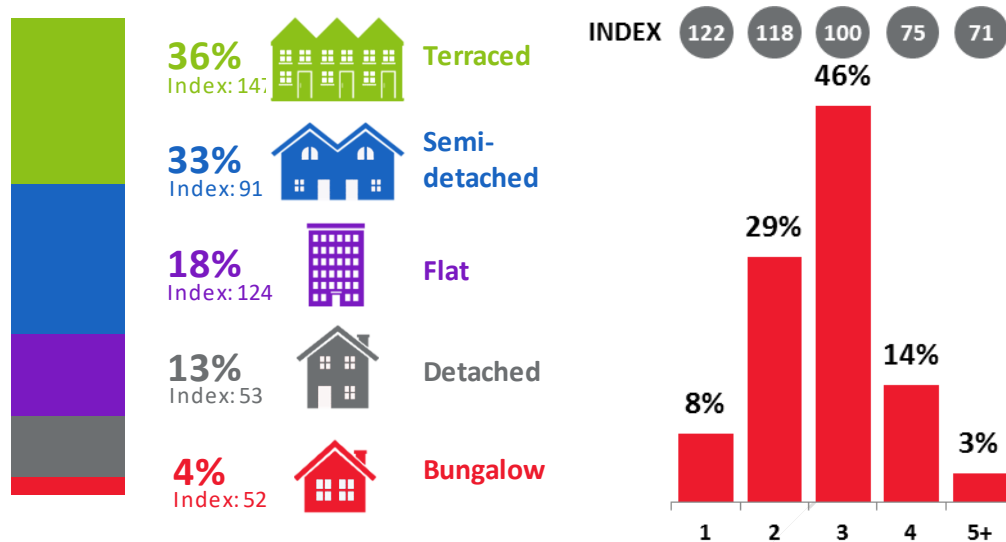
2 People 36%
Index: 97

3-4 People 37%
Index: 102

5+ People 8%
Index: 101

Number of Bedrooms

TYPE



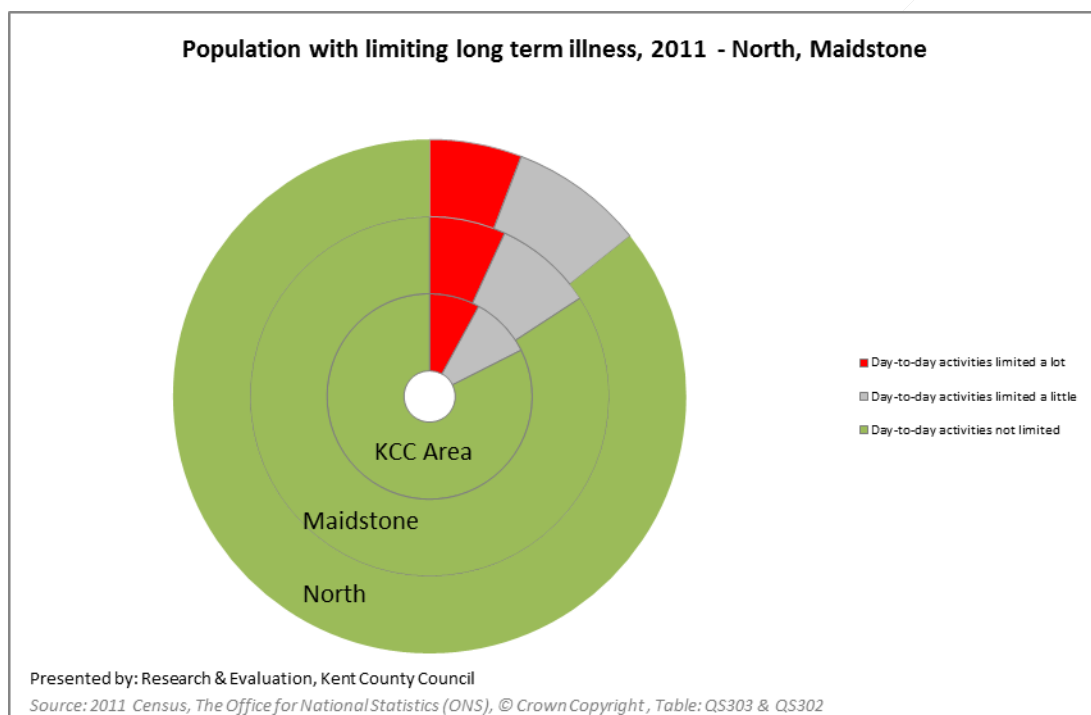
KEY INSIGHTS

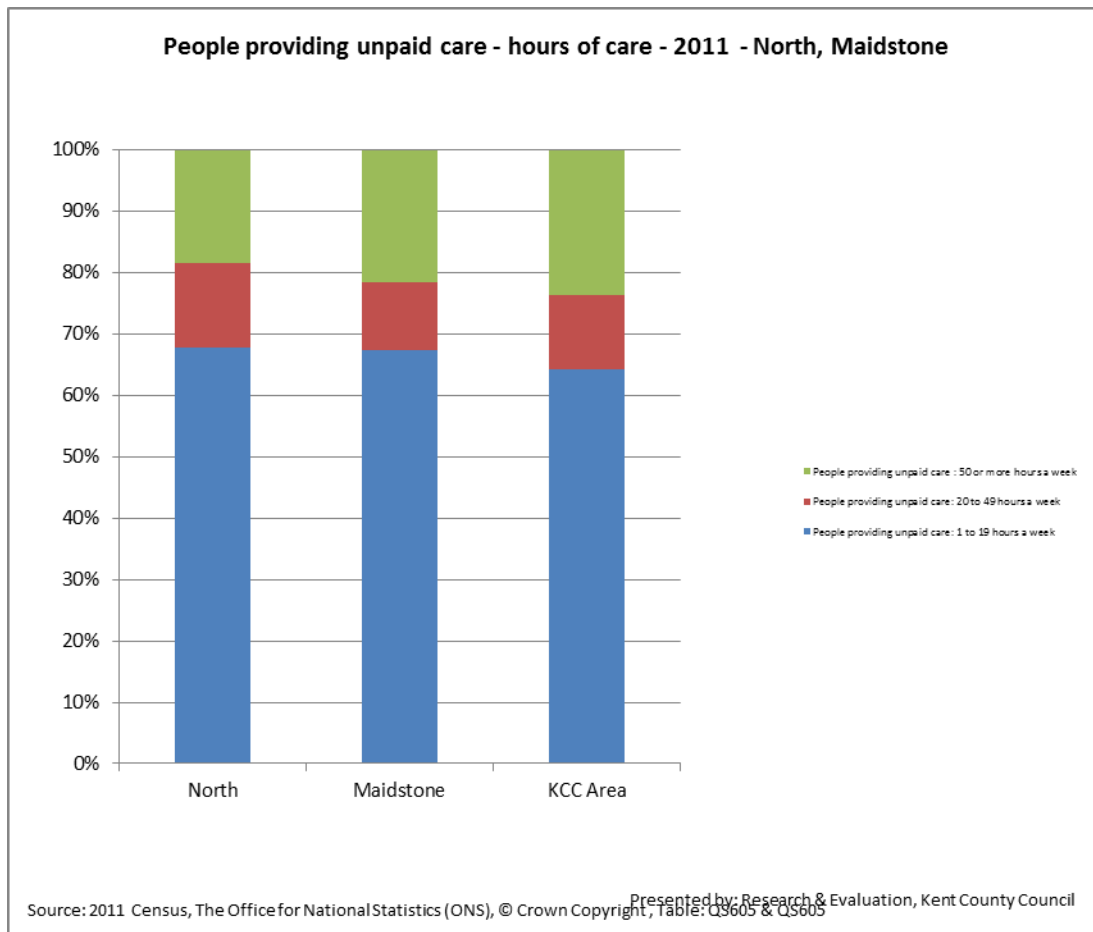
- Most households will have access to a mini/supermini.
- A higher proportion, in comparison to the base, are likely to have a mini/supermini.
- Terraced houses are 47.0% more likely than in the base.
- 22.9% of the households in the profile are likely to be privately rented.
- About 8% of households will have 1 bedroom.
- The prevailing size is 3-4 people but households with 1 person appear more than in the base.

5.4 HEALTH, POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION

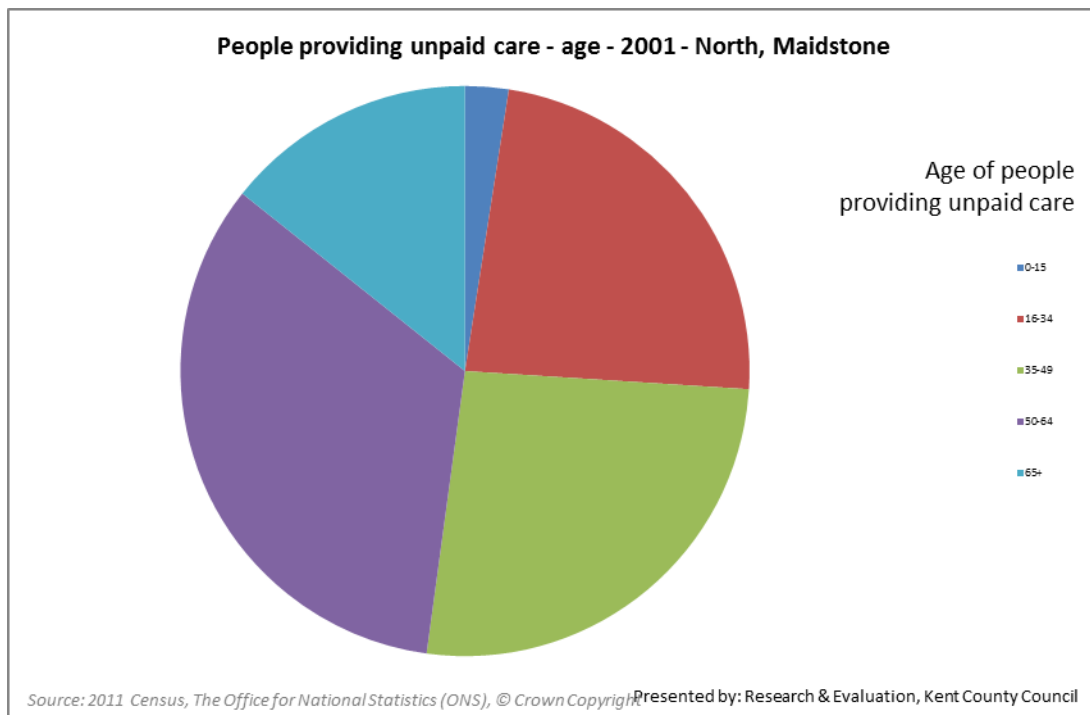
Understanding the ward's health, poverty and deprivation profile provides key insights into the range and types of services that may be demanded at a community centre. Below are the key characteristics of North Ward in relation to these issues:

- Life expectancy is lower than borough average in both males (77 compared with 79.9) and females (81 compared with 83.4)
- 811 residents are unpaid carers
- Parts of North Ward fall in the *national* top 20% of most deprived wards in relation to Health and Disability, Barriers to Housing and Services, Crime and Living Environment.
- 295 residents receive income support, 155 receive attendance allowance and 370 receive disability living allowance
- There are 445 Out of work benefits claimants which is in line with borough average at 6.3% of the 16-64 population
- 75 lone parents claim out of work benefits
- 73.3% of families in work receive tax credits compared with borough average of 69.8%
- 954 children live in households that are recipients of tax credits
- 445 children live in lone parent households
- 305 children in North Ward are classed as living 'in poverty'

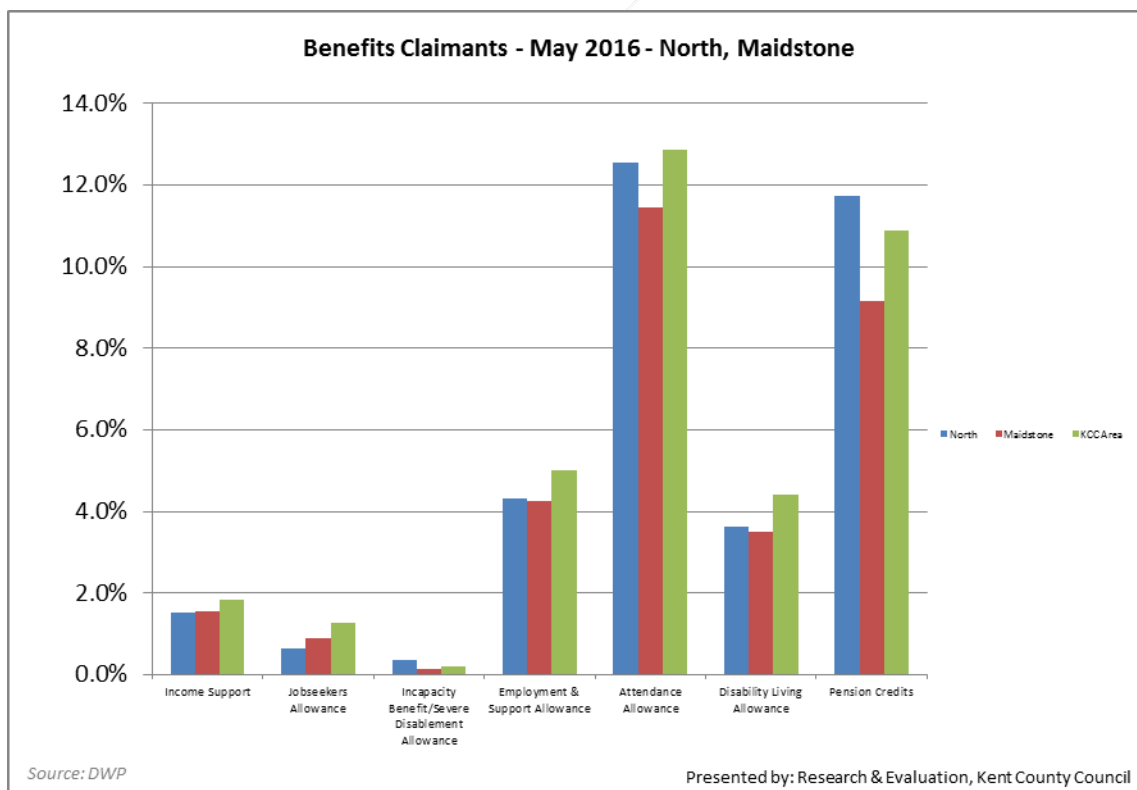


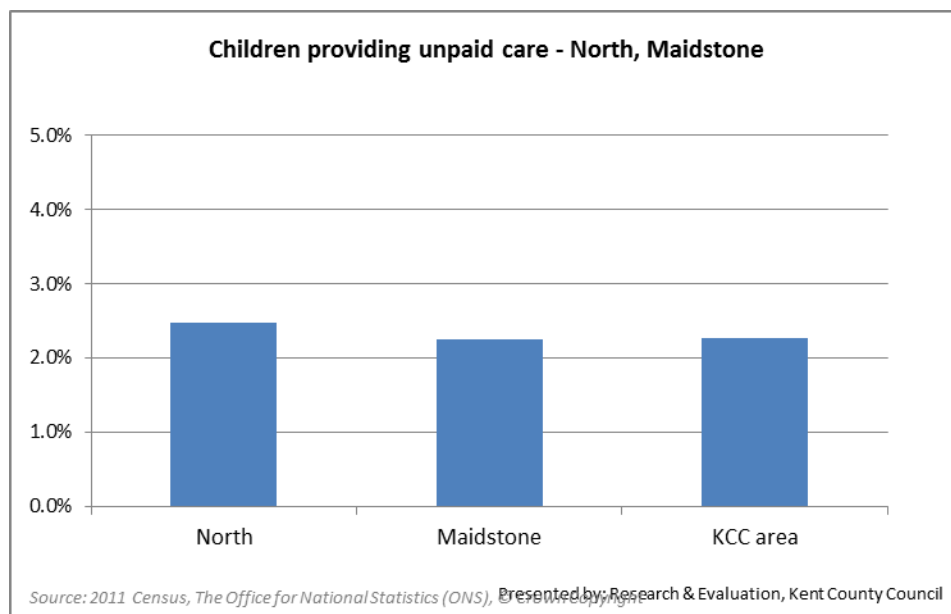
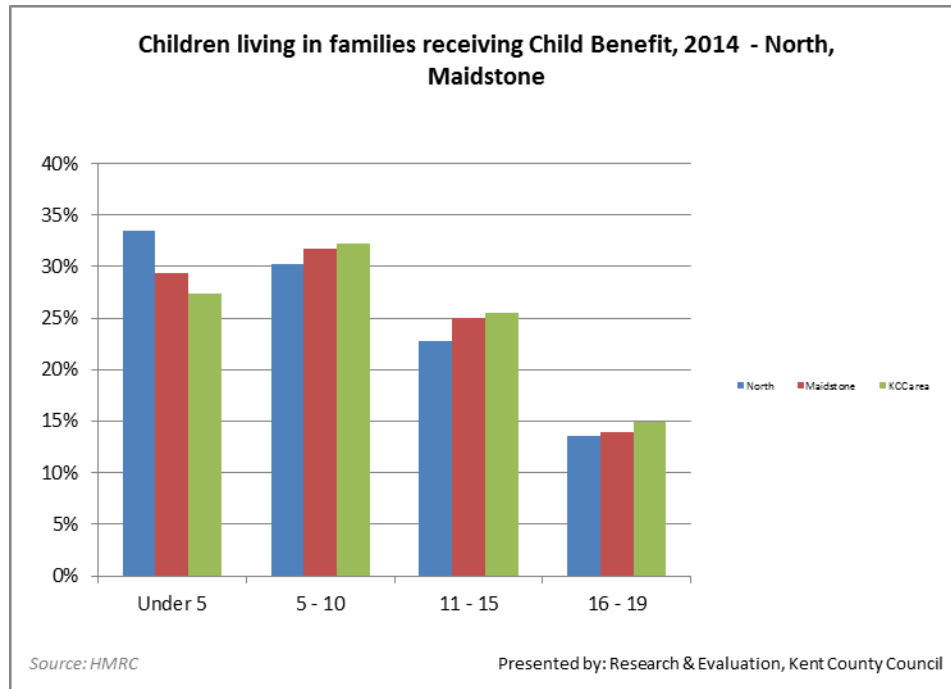


388 over 50s provide unpaid care.

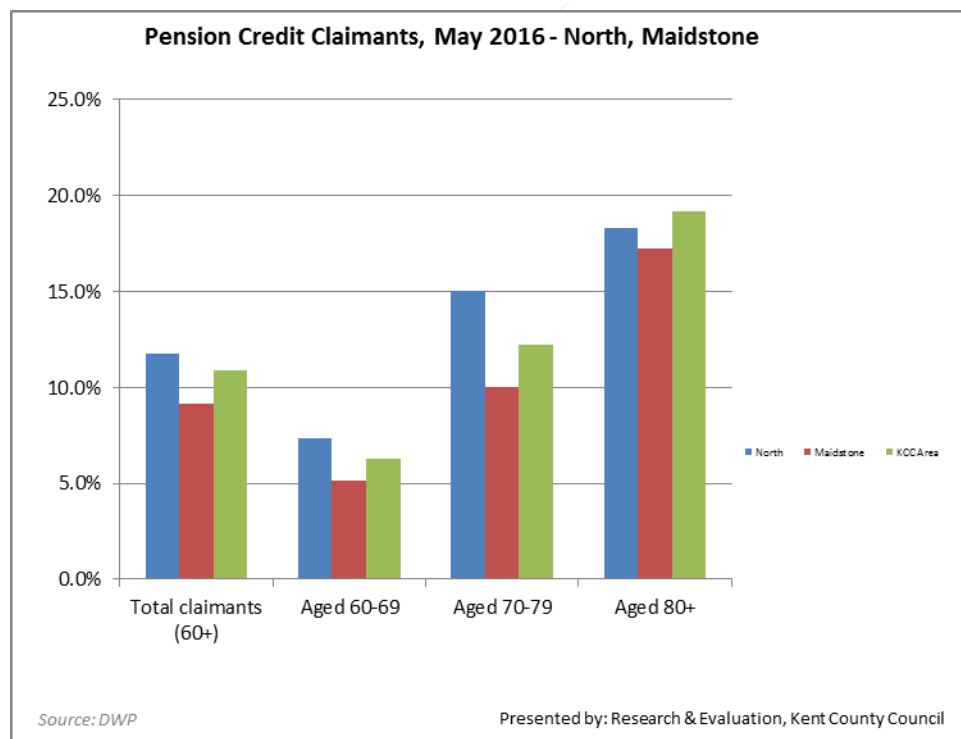
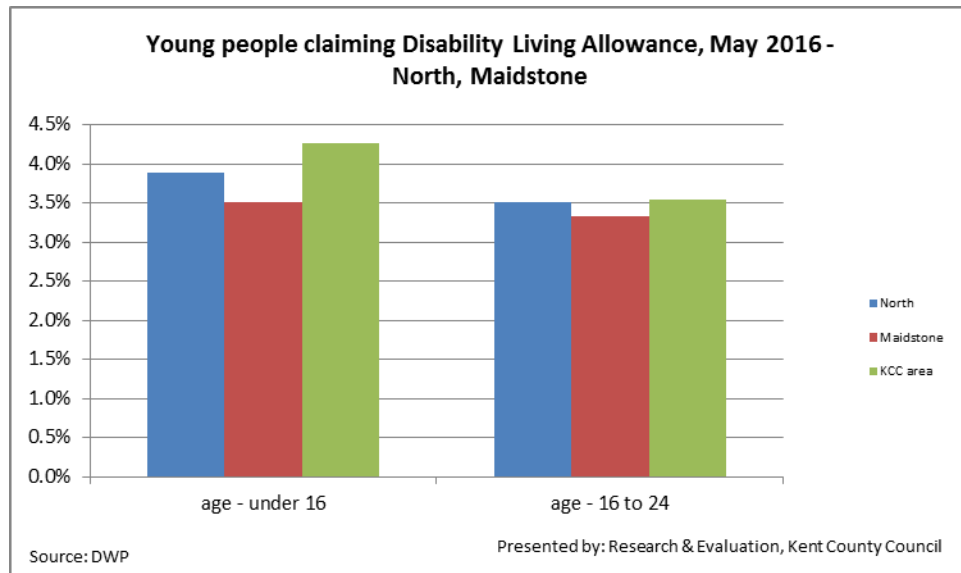


30.8% of over 60s claim disability benefits compared with the borough average of 23.4%, with 11.7% claiming Pension Credit compared with 9.2% for the borough





There are 75 claimants of disability living allowance aged under 16 with a further 40 aged 16-24



66.8% of over 50s have a long-term health problem or disability which is similar to the borough average

5.5 COMMUNITY WORKSHOP FINDINGS

A community Workshop was held on 28th March 2017 at St Faith's Hall to explore options emerging from the need profile developed during the first phase of the research for this study.

The workshop focused on four key themes and used a participatory workshop approach to encourage contributions from all participants. The session was lively and contributions were based upon significant local knowledge and insight.

The findings in relation to the four themes are present below:

1. How do you understand your community?

The debate from participants was heavily focused on identity and how this impacts on the use of current facilities, community cohesion and, importantly, the extent to which the site of any future facility would influence how well it would be used.

- Mixed and diverse with a range of ages, interests, faiths and in more recent times ethnicities. Feeling that this should be recognised in any development.
- Some participants were surprised to learn the geographic extent of North Ward, suggesting a more localised, neighbourhood view of 'community' than that of 'merely a political boundary'. This revealed the possible challenge of a single facility to serve all in North Ward.
- Strong military connection and 29 languages spoken in local schools, which brings people together. Community facility should welcome all.
- Different types of place and community: Penenden Heath, Chatham Road area, Ringlestone. This further added to the possible complexity of community recognising as facility as being "for them".
- Ringlestone has changed over the previous 20 years and will change significantly in the future. Some concern of the impact of new residents in the new housing developments but also changing nature of the resident population in existing housing stock. Pressure will be placed on local facilities by such a large increase of population.
- Current St Faith's Hall is already over capacity, the increase in population would simply add to this situation. Something needs to be done.
- Future development will change North Ward significantly bringing new people in and changing the area's character. Community Facility needs to be flexible enough to evolve as the community changes.
- Closure of pubs has impacted on sense of community; the community facility can provide a new focus.
- Concern over air quality and road safety, notably A229 (Royal Engineers Road). Increase in population could mean more car use and further degradation of air quality.
- A229 seen as separating the community of North Ward. This adds complexity to the siting of any facility and the "sense of ownership" for all North Ward residents. Concern that it may be seen as for the residents of the new developments or being exclusively for those on whichever side of A229 it is situated.

- Not a natural sense of coming together across North Ward. Individual neighbourhood identities are stronger than the administrative boundary of North Ward. This adds complexity to any choice of site.
-
- People do not want to step out of their neighbourhood comfort zone. This adds complexity to any choice of site.
- The following facilities and services were highlighted as important to meeting needs in the local area:
 1. Community wardens;
 2. St Faith's Church Hall;
 3. Local Schools;
 4. Millennium Park, Dickens Road Park, Penenden Heath, River Medway and towpath;
 5. Kent history centre and library;
 6. Cuckoo Wood;
 7. Maidstone United Football Club.

2. What facilities or services would you like to see safeguarded in your local area?

There was general agreement that the range of facilities outlined in section 4.1 above, with notable recognition of the Kent History Centre and Library, the primary schools, allotments, green space around the river Medway and Maidstone United FC as significant local amenities.

- St Faith's Hall, but car park limits use and it is tired. (consent granted for new build community facility on this site). Even those who wish to retain St Faith's Hall recognised it is no longer fit for purpose and would prefer a new facility. However, they expressed concern that it is better to retain St Faith's Hall in its present state than lose it, and its services, altogether.
- St Faith's Church itself in the town centre needs more parking. We were made aware of the possibility of St Faith's church being sold and the St Faith's worship taking place in a new location as yet undecided but possibly compatible with a new community centre.

3. What do you think your community needs, or needs more of?

There was general agreement and recognition that there are some notable and important services/ facilities that are either not available within the North Ward area, are currently under-represented or at possible risk of being lost.

- Medical centre / GP, none in the immediate area. This was of greatest concern and considered a priority given the size of the current population, the needs of older people and the significant increase in population as new dwellings are occupied.
- Use of Springfield Mill Ragroom as community facility or church. Discussion have taken place between developers and the St Faith's church raising the possible use of the Grade II listed Ragroom on the Springfield Mill site. This was seen as positive, but significant reservations were raised about the suitability of the building for the range of services the community requires.
- Would like to see a community trust model running whatever centre comes forward. Participants felt that the success of a community centre would be improved if local people were a part of the governance and management structures.

- A preference was expressed for a model that would have a full-time manager and a community board/ trust.
- Unanimous feelings expressed that any community space should consider flexibility at its core to recognise the diversity of local needs but also allow for changing needs as the population grows in the near future.
- Youth groups were raised as underrepresented and in need of priority support, a community centre would help to meet local need.
- A need was highlighted to support different population groups with life skills, notably young families, carers, and older people.
- Participants related that there was local interest in developing a cinema club
- There was also a need presented to support uniformed youth groups (Scouts, Guides, etc)
- An internet café was identified as being in demand for local residents notably specific groups, young people, young parents, older residents.

4. Where do you think community facilities should be situated?

The possible location of a community centre proved to be the most difficult question to address. As we have seen above North Ward is composed of a number of localities with distinct identities.

Additionally, the physical barrier of the A229 Royal Engineers Road was identified time and again as significant in residents understanding of their neighbourhood. Genuine concerns were raised that the location of a community centre on either side of the A229 would need to recognise the potential difficulty of marketing its use to all residents of North Ward, rather than being seen as “just for them”.

- St Faith’s Hall redevelopment- “25 car parking spaces minimal” – Arthur Houston is the church leader and led the development of the proposed St Faith’s redevelopment. The project did not proceed largely as a result of insufficient parking.
- 200 m2 community facility – on the Springfield library site is identified in the S106 agreement, however questions were raised about the limited size and in relation to parking provision.
- Ragroom on Springfield Mill site has been the source of some discussion but its suitability (as an existing building that would require conversion) and flexibility were questioned by participants.
- A new build option on the Springfield Site was seen to offer greatest potential to meet the wide range of flexibility required. A purpose-built option generally received the most support and positive reaction from participants.
- Different resources to support different communities – participants felt that there could be 2 community centres on either side of the A229, one being a larger “Hub” with larger capacity a range of facilities and one smaller serving a very localised neighbourhood.
- Springfield barracks were discussed in terms as a long-term future development. There is, however no timescale or detail relating to this site. Participants felt that the size of the site would potentially warrant its own community centre in the future (possible in 20 years). It was therefore not considered a relevant to the current need profile.
- Allotments – “but if you propose development on there you are liable to be shot”. This was an important point of discussion, acknowledgement that allotments provide possible site, but their current use was regarded as very important for the local community.



6 OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIONS



Sections 4 and 5 above have provided a strong sense of the unmet need or need for improved quality of community facilities serving the residents of North Ward. The research suggests that a purpose-built community centre is most likely to provide the widest range of positive outcomes for residents.

Further, sections 4 and 5 provide detailed insight into the type of services that can bring about positive outcomes for users of community centres and highlights specific user groups in North Ward and the types of service they need.

Key findings from sections 4 and 5 highlight the following in relation to proving a greater understanding of the need for and nature of services and facilities at a potential community centre for north ward. These include:

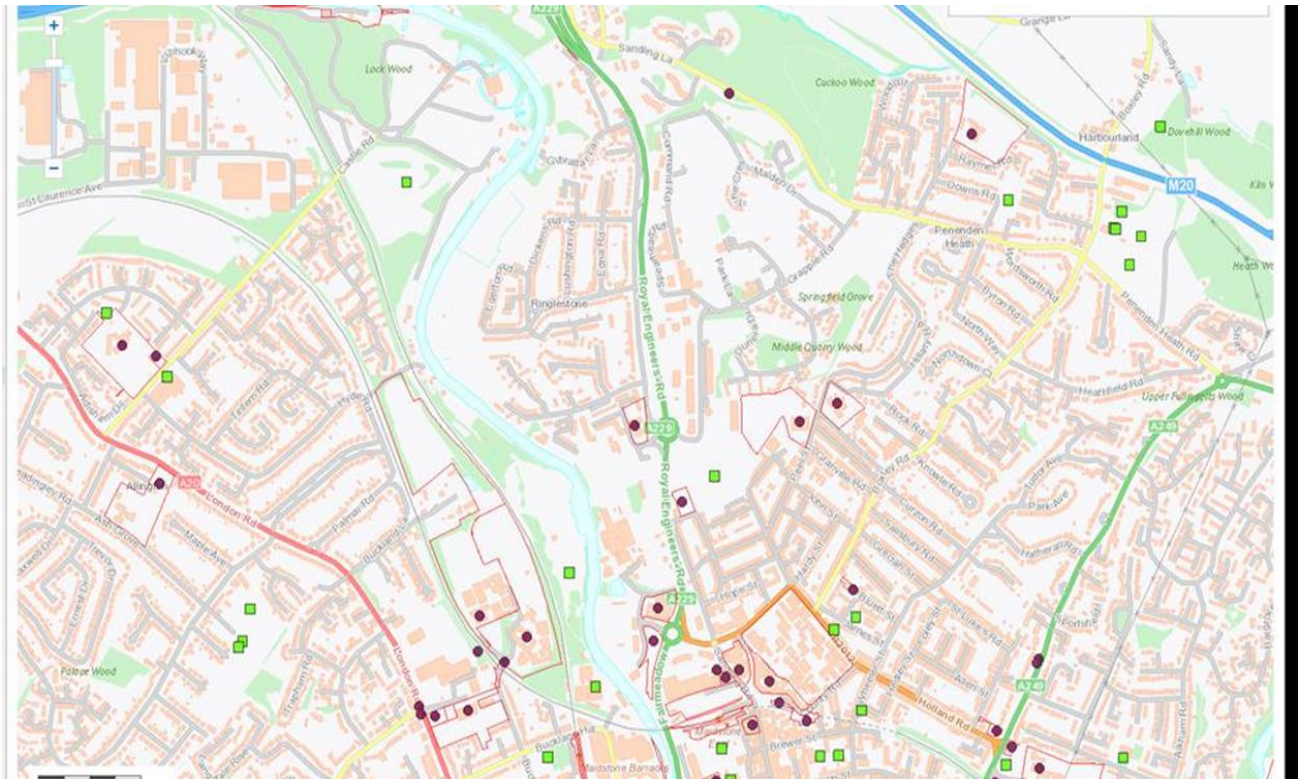
- North Ward is a complex area with distinct sense of identity in its neighbourhoods on either side of Royal Engineers Road (A229) (e.g. Penenden Heath, Chatham Road area, Ringlestone)
- A229 adds to the difficulty of selecting a suitable location that can be perceived as being ‘for all’
- Lack of GP surgery and health facilities more widely.
- Lack of youth facilities.
- Limited provision of small community halls, some linked to local churches and may be perceived as limited in use/ availability, Penenden Heath Social hall is not fit for purpose.
- Existing St Faith’s Hall is well used and highly valued but no longer fit for purpose
- Limited meeting places e.g. cafes and declining number of public houses in the area, potentially for older people to meet socially
- Limited spaces for indoor fitness sports activities
- North Ward population has changed rapidly over previous 10 years
- Local population will grow significantly and change in profile as new dwellings are occupied
- North Ward does not demonstrate any atypical characteristics, this suggests the need for a flexible community centre that can adapt to a wide range of need
- Changing and growing population would require a community centre with flexibility at its core

- Small but significant user groups would benefit greatly from a community centre where third part providers could deliver health care, advice, support etc. (e.g. unpaid carers especially young carers, those with long-term health conditions, young parents, non-native English speakers, lower income elderly people, lower income families).
- Provision of community learning would benefit low skilled, unemployed or active elderly population due to lack of college or other providers in the local area.
- Transport use and travel to work data suggest the local population prefer to access services in their local area supporting a potential strong use profile for a community centre located in North Ward.
- Strong desire for a community centre to be run by local people (e.g. community trust).

6.1 POSSIBLE SITES

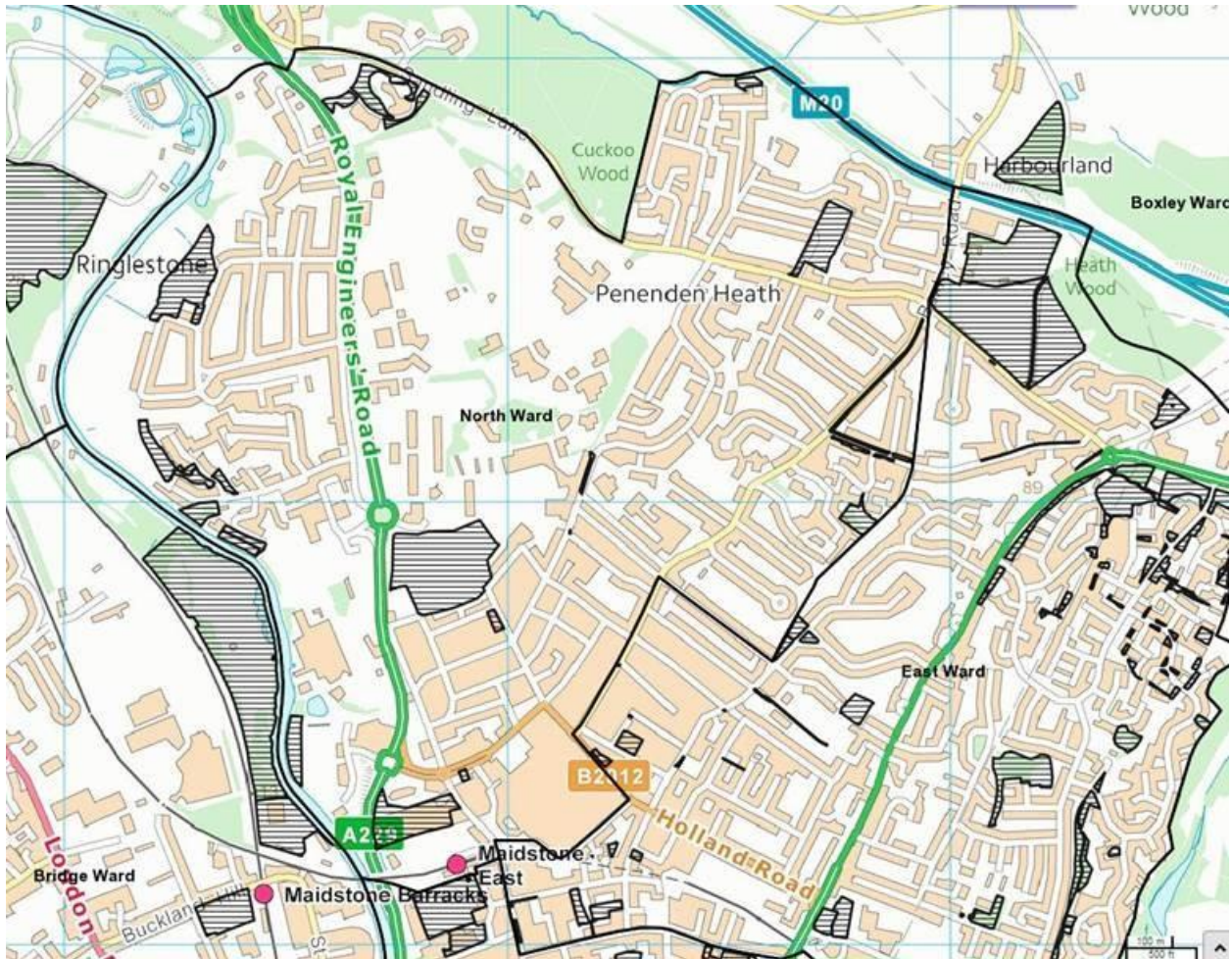
If a purpose-built community centre option is decided upon, it would then be necessary to select and acquire a suitable site.

The maps below highlight sites that are owned by either Maidstone Borough Council or Kent County Council. There may also be the possibility of discussion with developers at Springfield Mill for a suitable site.



Key: Purple coloured dots with red outlines – KCC Land, Green squares – MBC Land

Detailed Map of MBC Sites



As the above maps show, there are limited sites available. Further, these sites are spread across the ward with perhaps the site adjacent to Maidstone East Station or the allotments at Sandling Road providing the most central locations.

Opportunities exist, however on the, as yet, undeveloped Springfield Mill site.

Significantly, public opinion as to the location of a community centre is essential going forward to ensure support during design and development and, more importantly it future use and the sense of ownership local people would feel.

Consultation revealed the following in relation to potential sites:

- Current St Faith's Hall site – a well-known and popular site but has been discounted during feasibility work as too small.

- Springfield library site raised questions about limited size and in relation to parking provision.
- The Ragroom on Springfield Mill site has been the source of some discussion but it is seen as lacking the flexibility of space required that could be provided by a purpose-built centre. This is a Grade 2 listed Structure and would require detailed feasibility to assess its potential uses.
- A 'to be identified' plot on the Springfield Site for a purpose-built centre could provide the necessary space and flexibility.
- Allotment sites are located on the opposite side of A229 from the new developments but would provide the necessary space (notably Sandling Road) for a purpose-built option and serve the neighbouring area up to Penenden Heath. The resulting loss of allotments was raised as a highly emotive and negative option.

6.2 ST FAITHS HALL – CASE STUDY

Throughout the research which underpins this report, the question of St Faith's Hall has been dominant for three primary reasons:

1. The Hall has served as the primary community facility in the area for 80 years, is recognised as such and holds many memories for long term local residents
2. The hall continues to serve local residents with a range of activities such as those typically found at community centres
3. The hall has been considered as no longer fit for purpose for some time and very advanced work has been undertaken up to design and planning stage for a new community centre on the site of the existing one.⁹

- only 8 car parking spaces and no street parking in the nearby streets would seriously limit it's use
 - we were not aware of the further developments along the river at the time this plan was produced and now feel that any building must be more central and be able to draw users from the both the Ringlestone estate and new developments
 - the idea of a two centre approach (one larger and more central and one smaller and more local to Ringlestone) has gained much support and especially as the Peker Development (old KCC library site) are providing a ground floor community small hall with kitchen and toilets in their plans and this is very close to the Ringlestone estate.

Context

St. Faith's parish has been part of the life of the town of Maidstone since the 12th Century and the current church building in Brenchley Gardens is the third on this site and dates back to the Victorian era. In the 1930's when much of the surrounding housing changed to become more commercial and less residential the parish expanded to include the Ringlestone Estate. A plot of land was earmarked and money raised by members of St. Faith's to purchase the land to build a

⁹ Evident Consulting thanks representatives of St Faith's Church for their contribution to this study and this section in particular.

church and community centre for the new estate. The trust deed for the new building was broad in its aims as it stated that it was for the religious, social, educational or other purpose which the for the purposes of improving the wellbeing of those in the parish.

Plans for re-development

It became very evident some years ago that the building at Ringlestone was not fit for purpose and so the church began consultation and review to seek the best way forward. The highlights are:

2008- community consultation of current needs, confirmed the need for improved community facilities.

2009- a feasibility to consider the best building options showed that a complete rebuild was best.

2010- a separate charity called the Ringlestone Community Centre Development Group was formed with members of the church and local community as trustees with the objective of providing community space for the present and future residents. The trustees have considerable experience applicable to the task in hand.

2010- an architect was appointed and public consultations held regarding the design and scale required



Artists Impression of Proposed New St faith's Hall

2011- planning application submitted and approved, fund raising began.

2012- a Business Plan was commissioned to ensure financial sustainability of the new centre.

2014- funding proved very difficult to achieve for the scale of the project and its failure to meet criteria for substantial sources of funding. Local fundraising was strong but of an insufficient level.

2015- further reviews and public consultations also identified issues of lack of car parking (only 8 on the current plan) and also the imminent large scale developments of the Springfield sites and how to provide for their needs.

2016- St. Faith's concluded that it could not maintain and grow two individual sites (town centre church and community hall), that both current sites had various issues that made it difficult to see a way forward. A decision was taken to try and find a new site on the future developments that would provide the space for a church *and* community centre and with sufficient car parking, and sell the current assets to fund it.



Artists Impression of Proposed New St faith's Hall

The church had conversations with each developer to seek a way forward and consider available sites.

Meetings were held with the Diocese of Canterbury and Maidstone Borough Council and it was generally agreed that St. Faith's should consolidate its efforts and invest into a new site for a church and community centre.

Clearly significant work has been undertaken by St Faith's and commitment shown to supporting community work in the local area. This report recommends that St Faith's is considered as a key community partner and that the significant development work and knowledge of the St Faith's team be recognised as a valuable resource for following any decision to develop a North Ward community centre in the future.

6.3 A COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR NORTH WARD -OPTIONS

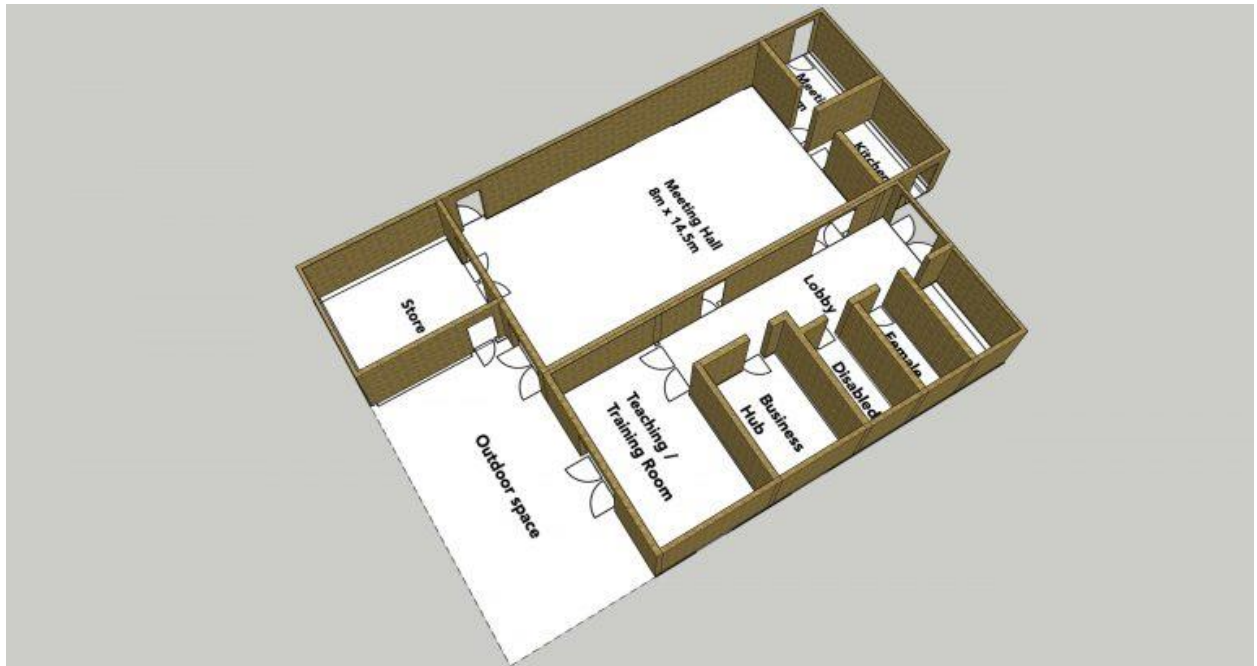
Based upon the research that underpins this report, this section suggests what a community facility for North Ward could be like. This section draws upon the case studies presented above, the learning from St Faith' Hall redevelopment work, the analysis of population data and the findings of the community workshop.

A new community centre could be provided to serve North Ward residents to be designed as a high-profile building that reflects the Council's and the community's objectives and vision. There will need to be detailed design and further consultation led by a suitably experienced architectural practice in order to both develop and test any final design.

This report recommends that the following be considered as an outline for a brief to architects

- Entrance lobby
- A 200 m sq. meeting hall with the facility for a demountable central divider – this provides the core space and is important for income generation through hire for private events and functions.
- Indoor storage space.
- A smaller 25 m sq. meeting room – useful source of potential hire income.
- A single meeting/ consultation room
- Male, female, disabled WC and baby changing facilities
- A teaching / training room
- Secure outdoor garden/ play area
- A kitchen
- Café area – café in community centres are important places for informal meeting and breaking down social isolation e.g. lunch clubs. Additionally, they serve as the hub of the centre and provide a useful source of income.
- A total area of 500 - 700m sq.
- Car parking for approx. 25 cars

Below is a typical floor plan for illustration purposes only



The table below suggests a range of possible options that have been developed based upon the findings of this report. Each acts as an illustration of the key models, there is scope for combinations of these options, however.

Options	Commentary	Risks
Option One: Do nothing. Council decides provision is sufficient	This option is for reference only.	This option would hold a number of 'high' risks', including loss of \$106 investment, continued deterioration of existing facilities, potential loss of services, activities, loss of local good will, reputational risk to MBC and Ward members.
Option Two: Re-use or renovate existing building	This would require the acquisition of a building of suitable size and type. As seen above there are few if any of these except the possibility of the Grade 2 Ragroom at Springfield Mill. This has restrictions and would be complex to convert so as to provide for the needs profile outlined above.	Unknown costs, limited opportunity to convert to be fit for purpose, seen a compromise, possible loss of local good will. Possibly unsuitable location, may exclude residents on the opposite side of A229. Would require feasibility to assess potential uses.
Option Three A: Purpose designed, new build community centre on plot to be identified at Springfield site	<p>This option allows for the greatest possibility of meeting local needs by providing a high quality purpose-built solution. Ideally local stakeholders would be actively involved in the design process allowing for a sense of ownership to be developed. Specific community needs could be accommodated in design.</p> <p>This would require the identification of a suitable site, and would be situated on the Springfield/ Ringlestone side of Royal Engineers Road close to the new housing</p>	<p>Unknown costs of land, design and build. Could be an expensive solution. May be seen as serving only Springfield/ Ringlestone residents. May be interpreted by existing residents as 'only for incomers'</p> <p>Possibly unsuitable location, may exclude residents on the opposite side of A229.</p>

	<p>developments.</p> <p>Embeds strong ethos of community ownership and responsibility.</p>	
<p>Option Three B: Purpose designed, new build community centre on plot identified at Springfield site in partnership with St Faith's</p>	<p>This option allows for the high possibility of meeting local needs by providing a high quality purpose-built solution.</p> <p>The community of St Faith's has demonstrated long-term commitment and has resources for a new community facility.</p> <p>This option would require the provision of community space for regular church services for St Faith's.</p> <p>This option would benefit from transfer of activities and services from St Faith's Hall, including experience and local trust.</p> <p>Specific community needs could be accommodated in design. This would require the identification of a suitable site, and would be situated on the Springfield/ Ringlestone side of Royal Engineers Road close to the new housing developments.</p>	<p>Unknown costs of land, design and build. Could be an expensive solution. May be seen as serving only Springfield/ Ringlestone residents. May be interpreted by existing residents as 'only for incomers'.</p> <p>Major concern would need to be addressed: would the community as a whole view the community centre as a church and, in some cases, not for them?</p> <p>Possibly unsuitable location, may exclude residents on the opposite side of A229.</p>
<p>Option Three C: Purpose designed, new build community centre on current allotment site.</p>	<p>This option allows for the greatest possibility of meeting local needs by providing a high quality purpose-built solution. Ideally local stakeholders would be actively involved in the design process allowing for a sense of ownership to be developed. Specific community needs</p>	<p>Unknown costs of land, design and build. Could be an expensive solution. May be seen as serving only one side of North Ward residents. May not be seen as being for new residents from Springfield developments.</p> <p>Major concern would be the</p>

	<p>could be accommodated in design.</p> <p>This would require the identification of which allotment site to be used.</p> <p>Embeds strong ethos of community ownership and responsibility.</p>	<p>loss of well used allotments. Community workshop participants raised significant concerns about any loss of allotments. This could prove high risk and prove very difficult to secure support from residents.</p> <p>Possibly unsuitable location, may exclude residents on the opposite side of A229.</p>
Option Four: Dual site approach, requiring two community centres on either side of Royal Engineers Road A229 using a combination of MBC/ KCC owned sites (Section 6.1)	Would require two sites and two delivery projects that would serve North Ward communities on either side of the A229. Would allow residents to access community services without the physical and psychological barrier of the A229. Could cater for different needs in each locality. Sites may be available on allotments, KCC Albert St Car Park or Penenden Heath	Could create division between residents on both sides of A229, costs would be likely to be greatly increased or doubled. Service provider partners may choose to use only one of these leaving one underutilised. Both would be in competition for income generation and funding/ investment. Capacity in each may have to be reduced resulting in two small, compromise, unfit for purpose centres.
Option Five: Community Facility on the ground floor of U&I Springfield tower	<p>This would have lower cost base and is already planned for community use.</p> <p>Designated community use is limited to 177sq m of A1/D1/D2 floorspace</p>	Could be perceived as only for building residents and be 'unwelcoming', May be interpreted by existing residents as 'only for incomers'. May be seen as serving only Springfield/ Ringlestone residents. Limited size and nature of building may reduce flexibility and types of services available
Option Six: Community Facility adhering to 12/2032	<p>The terms of the S106 agreement of 12/2032 includes:</p> <p>This agreement provides a covenant for the provision of a facility of not less than 200sq m provided to shell finish"</p>	The terms of the S106 are non-prescriptive in relation to the range of services to be available at a community facility, a definition of community facility or and facilities available. It serves as a financial mechanism and allows for flexibility for funds

		to be used allowing the council to develop another facility see Clause 5.1 “to either pay the Community Facilities Sum in accordance with the provisions of Clause 5.9 below or to comply with the provisions of Clauses 5.2 to 5.8 of this Deed.”
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6.4 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Any community facility will require robust management and it is essential that in addition to location and building design, that appropriate management and governance arrangements are in place, as early as possible in the development stage.

Initially, regardless of whether or which management option is adopted, we would advise a project working group is formed including representatives from:

- Local community representatives
- MBC
- Partners (e.g. health, police, KCC, etc)
- Developers (if appropriate)

This project working group would ideally seek to progress the decision made upon the findings of the present report and develop/ commission:

- Terms of reference and project management artefacts including a Project Initiation Document (PID)
- Preferred Site Feasibility
- Building Design and Costing
- Financial plan (capital and revenue)

In line with good practice, the future management arrangements for any new community facility should be considered at this early stage. It is therefore timely that this Future Options Review should include an initial exploration of the various management approaches that could be taken. The options that could be considered fall broadly into two distinct categories:

- Ownership and direct management by MBC through the existing Community Development team responsibilities for community centres
- Externalised management arrangements through a trust, partners, by commercial organisations or by charitable/social enterprise bodies

In both categories, separate arrangements might be considered for different parts of the building, with a wide menu of varied permutations.

The following table serves as an *illustration* of potential management and governance options that MBC may wish to follow, although it cannot claim to be a comprehensive options analysis or appraisal as there may be many subtle variations on each:



Options	Commentary	Risks
Option One: Council own and manage in line with policies in place for all the other centres operated through the Community Development team	Responsibilities would include building maintenance, staffing for reception, bookings and activities in the community space and the touchdown space, the café and operation of the youth facilities (potentially through provider), and space for the area's community development worker.	This option requires most of operational and staffing costs to be met from within Council budgets, although some costs may be shared with partners through a service charge (eg shared reception).
Option Two: Council retains ownership and building maintenance responsibility but operational management is delivered by other occupying organisations (e.g. residents association, community providers)	Responsibilities would be broadly similar to those above if overall operational, day-to-day functioning is taken over by one organisation. Alternatively, each different 'function area' within the building could be separately operated/managed. For example, the community space (and possibly also the youth wing and café) could be leased to a third party, managed directly by them.	The community development style/ethos of community centre management could be lost through this option. Need to find suitably experienced and resourced management agency If the building is not open on time, clean and well-presented, the vision of it as a welcoming multi-use base for services could be jeopardised.
Option Three: Council own the freehold of the building, but put the operational management of the premises out to tender on the basis of a jointly prepared specification	Building management could be put out to tender on the open market (or potentially added to any MBC existing leisure/ estates management contract). Alternatively, a restricted tender process could be undertaken to known/trusted independent community organisations or social enterprises to take responsibility for ongoing management on a leasehold basis.	Unknown capacity of contractor.
Option Four: building is owned and managed by a community trust with board members including at least MBC.	Embeds strong ethos of community ownership and responsibility. Could combine any sub-	Formation of new trust unknown. Unknown capacity of trust.

	elements of Options 1-3 above in relation to management and letting of spaces and provision of services.	
Option 5: Community Facility is owned and managed or managed by a specialist private company.	Building management could be put out to tender on the open market (or potentially added to any MBC existing leisure/ estates management contract with any current outsourced providers).	<p>Cost implications of procurement, public perception given strong support given to community trust model.</p> <p>The community development style/ethos of community centre management could be lost through this option. Need to find suitably experienced and resourced management agency</p>

7 REVIEW OF FUNDING OPTIONS

This section presents an overview of potential funding sources available to MBC or a purpose-designed community centre trust

7.1 SECTION 106

Springfield Library S106 Clause 5.3 states

"that the Community Facility will be not less than two hundred (200) square metres in area and will be provided to shell finish"

Clause 5.11 "the Council shall expend the Community Facilities Sum on the improvement renewal replacement and maintenance of a community facility such as a hall within a one mile radius of the Land"

*Development Securities S106 (MOD site) the definition of "Community Facility" in clause 1.1 of the Agreement shall be deleted and replaced with the following: "**Community Facility** means a community meeting facility and creche area to be provided within the ground floor of the retail unit of the Development or such other community facility which directly serves the occupants of the Development;"*

The current value of the S106 is £403,476.92.

7.2 ST FAITH'S LOCAL FUNDING GROUP

A separate fundraising sub-group has been set up by St Faith's and has already started to receive funds through various activities. It is understood that the group is in the process of developing a strategy and financial targets.

In addition, it has been minuted (13/06/13) that Reside may be in a position to secure funds from church authorities. It is understood preliminary discussions have taken place to explore financial and grant funding that maybe attracted to the project.

7.3 BUSINESS SPONSORSHIP AND SUPPORT

There are potential opportunities will development activity at Grange Park e.g. through the Local Centre and so forth that may form the catalyst for further professional and financial support, and additionally through the construction of the proposed community centre.

The café provision may also be attractive to independent or national franchising companies who may provide a contribution to fit-out costs, revenue income through profit share etc. The value of revenue income could also be a consideration if used to support potential capital loan requirements.

7.4 PARTNERSHIP

At a very late stage in the feasibility study the HWRA was approached by a commercial organisation wishing to develop a child nursery in the area and interested in exploring the opportunity at the Grange Park Community Centre. This opportunity is currently being pursued by representatives of the Steering Group but further information is not provided within this document as it could be commercially sensitive.

There is the potential to negotiate a capital contribution, share revenue and staffing costs etc. Care will also need to be taken in respect of usage conflict, health and safety / child protection issues, as well as the accommodation requirements that will impact on the current design.

7.5 CAPITAL GRANT FUNDS

Statutory Funding or public funding comes through a variety of routes such as Central Government Departments and Government Quangos etc, such as National Lottery Funds. They provide a vast array of funding opportunities through the various distributors which have specific themes, priorities and targets that they wish to meet.

In times of the economic downturn, access to public money will often be increased through various government based initiatives and interventions. We have seen this through economic development and regeneration based programmes e.g. Regional Growth Fund, and through the Lottery with the development of Reaching Communities Building Programme (BIG) and the Inspired Facilities and Improvement Funds (Sport England) as part of the Olympic Legacy.

A complex range of other funding sources exist e.g. Trusts and Foundations who generally derive their income from “endowment” (stocks, shares, land, and cash) which provide a tax-exempt income that is used for grant-giving – the individual level of grant giving can therefore be influenced by the Stock Market. Consequently under the current financial crisis, this will have an influence on the ability to maintain former levels of grant value.

As they are regulated under charity law they have to publish annual reports and accounts, including main grants and policy. Because of the wide ranging and number of Trusts and Foundations operating in the UK, it is difficult to generalise about their processes and practices – indeed some provide very little information (if any) and others require the

completion of detailed application forms. Only a small proportion (primarily the largest) of Trusts and Foundations employ staff and this generally reflects the detail and extent of the various application processes and the likely level of available grant.

Grant Funding Programmes are often quite specific and well defined / targeted in terms of their area of interest – this may be identified as a geographical area, type of beneficiary, specific theme etc. However, many of the Trusts and Foundations categorise themselves as more general or discretionary in the way they operate their grant programmes.

An additional component of the project is the opportunity to utilise environmental technologies, although the current building specification does not explore the potential in full at this stage.

Over recent years there have been a number of initiatives driven by Government to help reduce carbon emissions in order to meet agreed international targets. The Coalition Government, through the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and in conjunction with a range of partners and energy suppliers, continue to drive forward financial incentives and support programmes e.g. Green Deal, Feed-in Tariff (FIT), Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI), Community Sustainable Energy Programme (CESP), Enhanced Capital Allowance Scheme (ECAS) etc.

The financial incentives have ranged considerably across eligible targeted sectors, geography and type of support or benefits available, with some linked to time related criteria.

Some also require a partnership approach involving public, business and community groups (often referred to as domestic and non-domestic sectors) – the opportunities are/have been quite varied over time.

With respect to the initial funding opportunity assessment, basic search criteria has been used and in many cases a number of assumptions made e.g. legal status (as this issue is in the process of development), and has considered grants of various values that could potentially provide contributions to the project.

Example opportunities have been produced for this section to give indications of grant level. A separate detailed document has been provided.

- The Landfill Communities Fund (LCF) is a Government scheme which began life in 1996 as the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme to provide funding for community or environmental projects in the vicinity of landfill sites (£5K to £75K+)
- Community Right to Build
- The People's Millions Grants (£20,000 and £50,000)

- P & C Hickinbotham Charitable Trust (discretionary)
- Anton Jurgens Charitable Trust (<£5K)
- Church Urban Fund - Main Grants Programme (<£30K)
- John Laing Charitable Trust (<£25K)
- People's Postcode Trust - Dream Fund (<£250K)
- W. W. Spooner Charitable Trust Grant (<£2K)
- Anton Jurgens Charitable Trust (<£5K)
- Trusthouse Charitable Foundation (<£30K)

Note: The above are *examples only* to give an indication of the level of likely funding available. North Ward would be difficult to attract too many of the large grant funders as they are more focussed on areas of high deprivation or other key area criteria e.g. Big Lottery Reaching Communities Building Programme which provides grant levels of £500K+.

The opportunity exists to develop the information collated through the Feasibility Study into a detailed Funding Strategy once further work or confirmation on organisational status, constitution, objectives and outcomes have been developed.

7.6 LOAN FINANCE

An additional and potential source of capital which may have to be considered is loan finance. Here, the governance and management structure will have significant implications over eligibility.

There are various vehicles available which attract low interest or support the development of social enterprise which may be attracted to the community facility. Again, more detailed information has been provided separately to this report with examples set out below:

- **Charity Bank** provides affordable loan finance to charities, community associations, voluntary organisations, community businesses and social enterprises up to the value of £1m.
- **The Social Enterprise Loan Fund** is available to charities and social enterprises that have a charitable purpose for working capital, land and buildings and fixed assets of up to £250K

- **Triodos Bank** has loan packages and investment finance available to charities and social enterprises throughout the UK (discretionary)
- **The Royal Bank of Scotland** supports community-based businesses, such as social enterprises, charities and co-operatives, as well as business activity that provide a positive impact on society for loans of between £30,000 and £500,000.

Other opportunities exist, including high street banks and so forth.

8 CONCLUSION

This feasibility study set out to examine the need for a community facility for the residents of Maidstone North Ward. It further sought to examine the type of facility and the services it could provide that would respond to any identified need. Finally it examined questions relating to delivery and operational issues including: possible location, funding and governance/ management arrangements.

Throughout this report a number of key issues, challenges and considerations have been highlighted. The overall conclusion, given the feasibility approach, positively suggests that a community facility project has the capability to meet the needs identified and be able to support a range of social, leisure and cultural requirements for the current and future residents of North Ward.

This report concludes that North Way clearly presents two geographically distinct communities separated by the Royal Engineers Road (A229).

As a result this report recommends that MBC consider Option Four (above):

“Dual site approach, requiring two community centres on either side of Royal Engineers Road A229 using a combination of MBC/ KCC owned sites”

This option could be phased as follows:

- **Short to medium term – secure a community facility on the Springfield Mill site (New build or Ragroom conversion if suitable) to meet the immediate demands of the growing community as a result of the current developments and 24% increase in total North Ward dwellings.**
- **Longer term: to seek a suitable site (to be determined) on the Penenden Heath side of Royal Engineers Way**

Based upon the evidence gathered in support of the present study, it provides the following key findings:

Demand and Supply

- There is currently a lack of suitable community facilities in North Ward
- North Ward does not demonstrate any atypical characteristics, this suggests the need for a flexible community centre that can adapt to a wide range of need

- North Ward is a complex area with distinct sense of identity in its neighbourhoods on either side of Royal Engineers Road (A229) (e.g. Penenden Heath, Chatham Road area, Ringlestone)
- There is a large and growing population and therefore growing demand
- The housing stock is expected to grow by 24% based upon current planning permission, this will result in a similar growth in population and demand for services
- One of the key assets in the area (St Faith's Hall) is no longer fit for purpose
- Lack of GP surgery and health facilities more widely.
- Lack of youth facilities.
- Limited provision of small community halls, some linked to local churches and may be perceived as limited in use/ availability, Penenden Heath Social hall is not fit for purpose.
- Limited meeting places e.g. cafes and declining number of public houses in the area, potentially for older people to meet socially
- Limited spaces for indoor fitness sports activities
- Small but significant user groups would benefit greatly from a community centre where third part providers could deliver health care, advice, support etc. (e.g. unpaid carers especially young carers, those with long-term health conditions, young parents, non-native English speakers, lower income elderly people, lower income families).

Sites, Delivery and Management

- The question of one or two community facilities needs to be explored further, notably in relation to the future development at the Maidstone Barracks site in the medium to long term.
- North Ward can be considered as distinct from the adjacent town centre area with its own identity or identities
- A229 adds to the complexity of selecting a suitable location that can be perceived as being 'for all'
- S106 developer contributions provide an opportunity to (part) fund a community facility
- A community facility will need to involve a range of service providers and partners
- Given the lack of GPs surgeries in North Ward the community Centre should allow for a range of possible partnership opportunities with the local NHS such as screening clinics, nurse, health visitor, health advice, visiting GPs, etc. A suitable space would be required in the building.

- Re-use or conversion of existing buildings is likely to prove unsuitable, although the Grade 2 listed Springfield Mill Ragroom will need further consideration, but may prove too limited in its spaces to meet community needs.
- A dedicated new build community facility appears to best suit current and future need
- Careful consideration will need to be taken in selecting a site that best suits all the community -Springfield offers greatest choice of sites
- Transport use and travel to work data suggest the local population prefer to access services in their local area supporting a potential strong use profile for a community centre located in North Ward.
- St Faith's Church community centre aspirations provide a strong partner opportunity
- Use of allotment sites could prove highly controversial with local residents
- There is no national standard for a community facility, however best practice provides direction
- A working group and steering committee should be established to take the findings of this study forward.

This report recommends that the client proceeds to the next stage in the development of the project in line with Action Plan below.

9 IMMEDIATE NEXT STEP ACTION PLAN AND TIMESCALES

The Action Plan below serves as an illustration of steps to assist MBC in decision making and planning any project development.

To assist in any work planning decision, each action has a suggested target period – this is ‘best case scenario’, is not fixed and will be dependent upon a wide range of factors

Action	Priority	Risk (to project progress)	Suggested Target Period
1. Review Feasibility Report and approve (subject to any agreed amendments)	High	High	2 weeks
2. Circulate findings to stakeholders to ensure continued engagement, ownership and commitments through on-going consultation and dialogue	High	High	1 to 3 months (on-going)
3. Establish project steering group and working group to take findings forward and own the next steps	High	High	1 to 3 months
4. Establish Terms of Reference, constitution, vision, aims and objectives (including project outcomes)	High	High	1 to 3 months

5. Develop robust and time-related targeted local funding strategy (Funding Sub-Group) for Steering Group approval	Medium	Medium	1 to 3 months
6. Set up awareness raising activities going to encourage future users and partnership opportunities	Medium	Medium	1 to 3 months (on-going)
7. Set up project development meeting(s) with developer, land agents, to identify site	High	High	1 to 3 months
8. Secure development funding / in-kind support required for next stage project development	High	High	1 to 3 months
9. Secure professional services support to progress design development and cost requirements	Medium	High	4 to 6 months
10. Develop governance requirements, and operational management structure / requirements	Medium	Medium	4 to 6 months
11. Develop project business plan and detailed funding strategy and commence implementation	High	High	4 to 6 months

These key actions would ideally be addressed over the next 6 months. The risk associated with not implementing the actions has been assessed in the table above and will have a bearing on the ability of the client to move the project forward at each stage.

It is recommended that monthly progress meetings (or more regular if required) are set up to ensure the 'business' of project development proceeds in a timely manner.