

Employment Policies



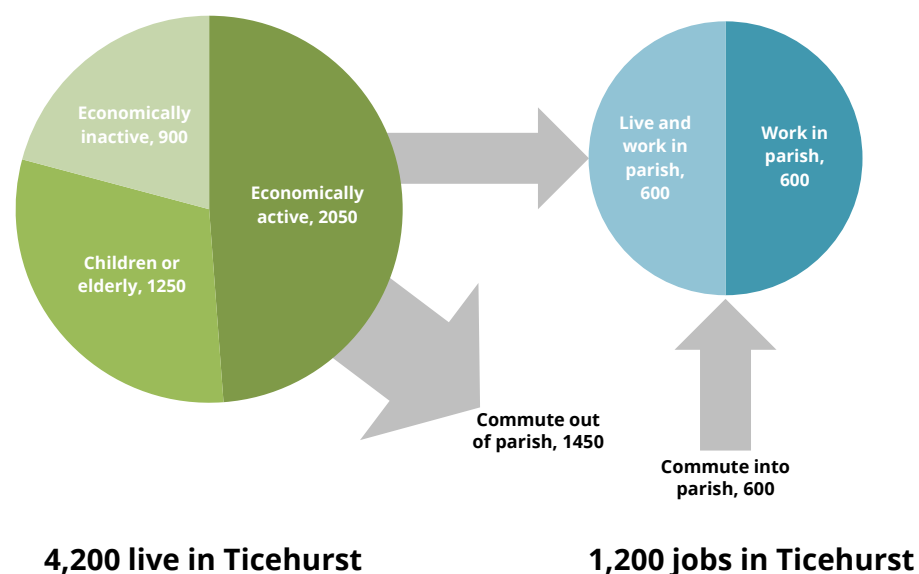
Objective No. 3 — Use local resources to build the local economy supported by good infrastructure.

Objective No. 4 — Ensure that the parish residents have the facilities they need including health, education, leisure, retail.



5.1 The aim of the Ticehurst Neighbourhood Plan is to support and extend the employment opportunities within the parish.

5.2 The TNP Business Survey showed that there are 125 enterprises in the parish, employing about 900 people, although the survey also showed that only about 25% of their employees lived in the parish. The 2011 census showed that there were about 550 self-employed in the parish and many of these would not be registered businesses (for example, gardeners, decorators and cleaners). The TNP estimate of the number of jobs within the parish and who does them is derived in the TNP document “Evidence on Employment in Ticehurst” and a summary is shown below.



5.3 Despite the wide variety of local businesses, there are limited local job opportunities for Parish residents. As a result, as shown in the diagram, many Ticehurst residents commute to work elsewhere. One of the desired outcomes of this Plan is to contribute to the success of local firms and, if at all possible, attract new enterprises, so that more local jobs become available. The TNP Business Survey has also shown that broadband speed and mobile coverage are two of the top four business issues (the other two are parking and the condition of the roads).

5.4 Increased connectivity from super-fast broadband of up to 75 Mbps (only partially available in this area) and comprehensive mobile phone connections make it viable for people to work from home or locally, thus providing investment in the local economy. Working from home is a growing trend: when office work can be undertaken equally well at home, it saves travelling long distances to offices and it reduces congestion and pollution. New phone and communication masts will be supported where they are isolated from the built environment and give the widest service to end users with the minimum visual impact.

5.5 Historically, farming and horticulture were the major sources of employment in the parish, but as in the rest of the British countryside, the parish has seen significant changes because of increasing affluence, the rise in car ownership, the movement of people from town to country and changes in farming practices. The soil in the parish is variable but generally poor and the steep wooded valleys result in small fields. There are several small mixed and arable farms, but although much of the land is still farmed, the number of farmers and agricultural employees has reduced dramatically and some farm buildings have been converted

to other uses. The re-use of rural buildings will be supported in the plan and reserved for commercial use, as they can provide new start-up enterprises. Any developments should be sensitive in scale and low in impact to fit into the local landscape. Respect for sustainability and local character will contribute towards long-term success of these developments. Rother District CS policy RA2 (General Strategy for the Countryside) supports these objectives.

5.6 This plan will encourage rural employment and rural sustainability of farming and forestry to promote local employment opportunities and prevent the disappearance of our local heritage. Agriculture is still very important to Ticehurst Parish, but tourism, niche manufacturing and recreation are also becoming major drivers in rural economies. Whilst agriculture and associated rural businesses are custodians of the land, tourism offers opportunities for farm diversification and enterprise.

5.7 The Parish is situated in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), close to a range of attractive places and recreational activities for visitors to enjoy, such as significant historic houses and castles, nationally renowned gardens, and to Bewl Water and Bedgebury Pinetum. Investment in tourism and recreation throughout the parish will be supported. There are also three established wedding reception venues: The Bell Hotel, Dale Hill Golf Club and Swallows Oast. Local B&Bs and self-catering accommodation are also available.

5.8 Compared with many other areas, Ticehurst Parish still has a good variety of retail businesses and services. It has a health centre, a large clinic (The Priory), a residential care home for the elderly (Cross Lane House), and four other developments for elderly people providing sheltered or extra-care apartments. There is a large commercial vehicle recovery company. Other commercial enterprises include manufacturing businesses, coach companies and several small industrial and service units.

5.9 The aim is to retain the existing range of shops and services in Ticehurst Village centre. The present healthy mix of retail and commercial services act as a rural service centre and are the beating heart of the parish.

5.10 Our policies will ensure that the plan fulfils the following objectives:

- 3) Use local resources to build the local economy supported by good infrastructure
- 4) Ensure that the parish residents have the facilities they need (health, education, leisure, retail)



There are many varied and well-loved businesses and characters across Ticehurst.

Policy E1

Protect & Enhance Local Services & Facilities

1) Local services and facilities should be retained and developed within the three village centres.

2) Existing retail and local services will be protected. Proposals that would result in their loss, particularly within the Ticehurst Village retail core (Map 13) will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that there is no reasonable prospect of its continued use or use for an alternative commercial or community use, based on evidence that the premises have been actively marketed for at least 18 months.

5.11 Ticehurst Village has an historic centre which forms part of a conservation area and has been identified by residents as an important retail area both for now and for the future. It is fortunate to possess a range of great local services which, amongst others, include a chemist, general grocery shop, green grocer, baker, fishmonger, two cafés, dry cleaner, florist, hairdresser, haberdasher, art gallery, gift shop, model shop, interior designer, estate agent, car showrooms, an Indian restaurant and two pubs. These all contribute to the vitality of the area, encouraging footfall and a positive, flourishing environment whilst retaining a personal local service. Fish and chip and pizza vans regularly visit the square. These facilities provide:

- amenities and employment to the local community;
- easy access from existing residential areas;
- a healthy mix of retail services, with both essential and specialist shops complementing and supporting each other.

5.12 All of this has contributed to its identification as a “rural service centre” in Rother District Council’s Local Plan Core Strategy. Rother defines a rural service centre as one with a good range of local shops, services and social infrastructure (at least 14 out of 18 of the identified service level indications) serving an area that extends beyond its own boundaries.

5.13 The Parish Council continues to make improvements to the village centre area, developing plans that celebrate its heritage and local character, creating an attractive space for locals and visitors to enjoy

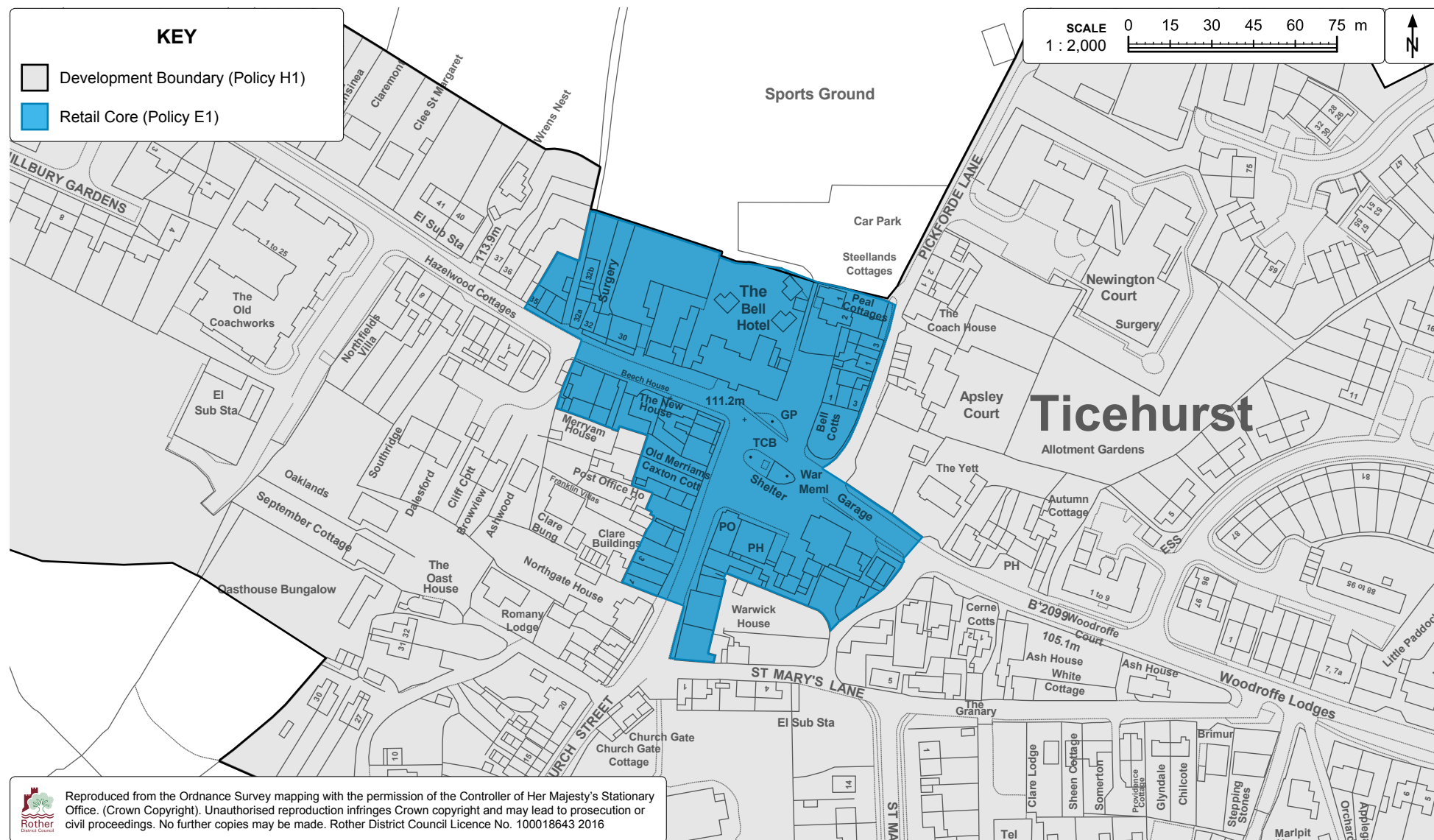
and one which also makes it easier for people to move around safely. The neighbourhood plan supports this approach and any limited enhancements to retail outlets in Ticehurst centre that meet the needs of the users.

5.14 Flimwell is divided in two by the A21 and therefore does not have a village centre. It is hoped that the development at Corner Farm, with the inclusion of a village hall and a convenience store (strongly supported by the 2017 Flimwell Village Survey) will strengthen its core. However, uncertainty about the future route of the A21 still makes further planning problematic: representation was recently made by local councillors to Government Ministers for clarity.

5.15 Flimwell does however have several successful retail outlets. These are more akin to highway and trade outlets, serving shoppers from a wide catchment area. The Weald Smokery has won several 'Great Taste' awards and sells its products throughout the UK as well as locally. Bean Smitten Coffee Roasters supply businesses and individual customers throughout Kent and Sussex. There is also a furniture store, Tate Fencing, a car dealership and farm shops. This diverse range needs protection as it provides useful local employment and brings shoppers into the parish.

5.16 Stonegate does not have any retail outlets. However it has a mainline railway station and an active village hall run by a management trust. A Farmers Market takes place once a month at a local garden centre, outside the village centre. Rother District CS policies RA1 (i), (iii) and (iv) (Villages) and EC7 (Retail Development) support this policy.





Map 13 — Ticehurst village retail core.

Policy E2

Support Tourism & Recreation

Developments that support tourism-related and recreational enterprises will be welcomed and supported, especially where proposals meet the concept of sustainable rural tourism regarding green travel, sustainable employment and the production and consumption of local produce and materials.

5.17 Tourism is important to Ticehurst and the local economy. It encourages development and provides a valuable source of income for shops and businesses in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, offering opportunities for farm diversification and varied employment in the leisure industry. Ticehurst has become a popular venue for weddings and for those who wish to enjoy a short break in the countryside or participate in special events such as dragon-boat racing or fishing competitions at Bewl Water.

5.18 Two-thirds of Bewl Water rests within the parish. The reservoir was built in 1975 and is the largest inland stretch of water in the south east. It provides a wide range of recreational activities such as angling, walking, horse-riding, sailing and canoeing. Sussex Wildlife Trust manage a nature reserve in the southern shoreline and visitors to Bewl Water can observe a wealth of wildlife.

5.19 Investment in tourism and recreational activities throughout the parish will be supported. Visitors attracted to this beautiful area bring income to the parish which outweighs the additional costs of tourism. Host venues in the parish strive to source produce and labour locally, ensuring that as much economic value as possible goes back into the community.

5.20 This policy is supported by Rother District CS policies RA₃ (Development in the Countryside) and RA₄ (Traditional Historic Farm Buildings).

Policy E3

Promote the Diversification of Agricultural Businesses

Re-use of rural buildings will be supported, to promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based businesses, subject to the following conditions:

- 1) Proposals have regard to the Design Guidance (see pages 94 — 117).
- 2) Proposals respect the character of the High Weald and have regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2014 — 2019.

5.21 Agriculture has been for centuries the basis of the local economy. Whilst it now provides less than 4% of the jobs within the parish (2011 census), it is still an important part of our landscape. By encouraging diversification of agricultural businesses, the TNP will help to ensure the sustainability of farming and forestry in the parish and preserve its unique environment.

5.22 The re-use of rural buildings will support local markets, encourage economic activity, and provide seasonal outlets for local produce. Whilst some new buildings will be needed, the re-use of old buildings conserves and enhances the local character. Rother District Council CS Policy RA4 (Traditional Historic Farm Buildings) and CS Policy RA3 (ii) (Development in the Countryside) specify a similar approach to the reuse of farm buildings, aimed at generating employment.

5.23 Flimwell has the Woodland Enterprise Centre, with workshops and office space for rent that can instigate new small woodland and timber-related start-ups. Flimwell Park, currently being built, will provide a cluster of small workshops and a large studio-workshop and training facility. Stonegate is a candidate for a similar employment site with smaller workshops.

Policy E4

Protect & Enhance Existing & Encourage Additional Commercial Employment Sites

Existing commercial employment sites should be protected and enhanced, subject to there being no significant adverse impact on their neighbours and physical surroundings.

Any additional new or expanded employment sites would need to meet the following specific criteria:

- 1) The site should have suitable vehicular access and the appropriate level of local car parking that conforms to the ESCC standards (ESCC Guidance for Parking in Non Residential Developments).
- 2) The residual impact of the proposed development on the highway network, after any mitigation, should not be severe.

3) The development should not result in significant harm to the amenities of adjoining residents or other adjacent users (for example due to increased traffic, noise or smells).

4) The development is subject to other policies in this plan, and to Rother District CS policies RA2 (General Strategy in the Countryside) and RA3 (ii) (Development in the Countryside).

5.24 There are several large businesses in the parish (e.g. The Priory – Ticehurst House Hospital, Mick Gould Commercials, Advartex). There are also five sites for multiple commercial businesses with at least 35 active businesses (Map 14). The TNP Business Survey found 125 registered local businesses within the parish. Change of use for employment sites will not normally be permitted during the lifetime of this plan (2018 – 2028) unless it is clearly demonstrated that a site is not suitable for commercial use. These sites provide significant local employment within the parish and therefore any proposals which lead to the modernisation or upgrading of the current employment sites will be welcomed and supported.

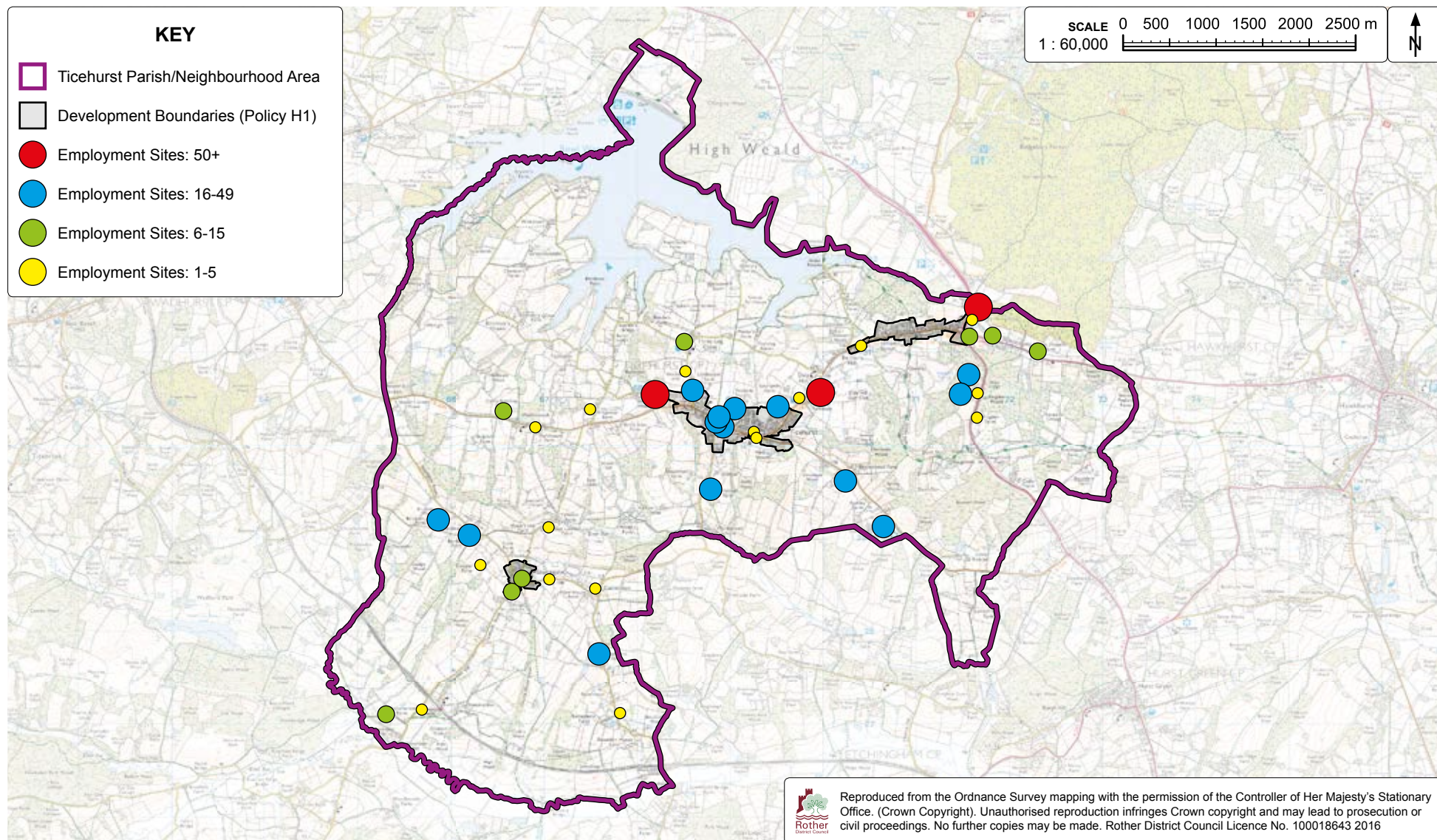
5.25 In response to the Ticehurst Neighbourhood Plan (TNP) Business Survey 2017, people said that local services and facilities were very important as they:

- had another local business as part of their supply chain;
- were dependent on other local businesses and products;
- supplied local services and goods to local businesses as a major part of their business.

5.26 Businesses which were near others tended to support each other. The most significant example was at the Gibbs Reed Business Unit – businesses generally benefited from being close to each other and using each other's services to complement one another. The TNP Business Survey also found that over 50% of the businesses who responded had expansion plans, showing a positive view of their commercial future.

5.27 When the answer was weighted by the number of people employed in the business, this increased to almost 90%. The majority of these expect to achieve expansion within their existing sites, but a significant 11% of the businesses were seeking to expand by finding another site within the parish. It is estimated using several sources that only about 50% of jobs in the parish were taken by local people. Additional employment sites aimed at small businesses should increase this percentage. New businesses are still coming into the parish: a hardware trade outlet is being developed on the B2099 at Wallcrouch and Flimwell Park (see below) should provide employment for both artisans and support staff.

5.28 Flimwell supports many successful businesses for which good transport links are important, such as Mick Gould Commercials and Hams Travel. The office of the High Weald AONB unit, set up to protect and raise awareness of the special High Weald landscape, is situated on the east side of the village. Flimwell is also a venue for training and research for all enterprises associated with the sustainable management of woodlands. The Woodland Enterprise Centre hosts Plumpton College and the charity WoodNet, and is adjacent to Tate Fencing. Flimwell Park, currently being built, will be a centre for woodland management and timber construction excellence, with links to the Bartlett School of Architecture (UCL). Additional businesses will require additional traffic and this must be taken into account in choosing a new or expanding an existing site. Designating small lanes as "Quite Lanes – unsuitable for heavy traffic" will help to manage the extra traffic. This policy is supported by Rother District CS policies EC2 (Business Land and Premises) and EC3 (Existing Employment Sites).



Map 14 — Ticehurst parish commercial employment sites.

Policy E5

Improve Essential Infrastructure

Proposals for new and improved community infrastructure and utilities in the plan area will be supported subject to those proposals being compatible with other planning policies in the development plan.

5.29 Community infrastructure includes utilities (electricity, gas, water, sewage), communications (phone landline, mobile phone, broadband) and transport (bus, train, roads and parking). These are supported by Rother District CS policy EC1 (Fostering Economic Activity and Growth).

5.30 The TNP Business Survey found that 58% of employers said that broadband was critical to their business. Super-fast broadband with speeds up to 75 Mbps is available in the village centres. BT has installed cabinets which are connected to the exchange using fibre-optic wiring; individual buildings are still connected by copper wire. However, within 1 km of a cabinet, the broadband speed falls to 28 Mbps and within 2km it drops to 17 Mbps – effectively the same as if the cabinet were not there.

5.31 There is therefore good broadband coverage in the village centres, but this does not extend to all the business sites (for example, Battenhurst). There is no published schedule for improving the coverage

throughout the parish. Super-fast broadband speed of 200 to 1000 Mbps that requires fibre-optic wiring to each individual building is essential for modern business, but is highly unlikely to be offered in a rural area.

5.32 In addition, 34% of employers said 4G Mobile was critical. At present mobile coverage is very poor, even in parts of the village centres. A new mast has recently been installed near to Ticehurst village centre. It is intended to cover a 5-mile radius for O2 and Vodafone.

5.33 Parking and the conditions of roads were the other two major concerns of employers. The TNP would support a new parking area within Ticehurst. Rother District CS policy TR4 (Car parking) refers only to car parking on new developments. In Flimwell, the plans for development at Corner Farm include a public parking area for nine cars.

EMPLOYMENT COMMUNITY ACTIONS

Work with local businesses

5.34 Ticehurst Parish Council will encourage large employers to provide work experience and further training to local people. Local businesses and their products will be publicised and promoted to the community.

5.35 The parish needs to retain young people. The opportunity to have local work experience and training will encourage the next generation to remain and add to the life of the parish.

5.36 There are some large businesses in the parish, whose employees mainly live outside Ticehurst Parish. By providing work experience and training to local people, employers would increase the opportunities for people to remain in the parish. The TNP Business Survey found that the four top types of business representing 77% of employees are:

- Healthcare
- Building Trades
- Hotel/Catering
- Services to the public (education)

5.37 It is also important to advertise products that are produced locally, so that they can be purchased locally. Parishioners should ensure that they are supporting local businesses and contributing to lessening product mileage.