

# Environment Worksheet

## WORKSHEET EN1: CHARACTER AND VITALITY OF THE TOWN

**Task:** to find out what aspects of the town and its hinterland give it character and vitality, and to describe the quality of these features.

### 1: Introduction to the task

Most market towns and their surrounding countryside contain environmental and historic features that help give the town a special character. Some of these may be well managed and in good repair; others may be neglected or in poor repair. Your task should cover both the built and the natural environment. You should also consider what activities are being undertaken by local groups to improve the environment and try to build on these activities. In so doing:

- Use the Local Plan and/or Town Design Statement for existing information and plans
- Try to assess what is distinctive about the town's environment (both natural and built)
- Think to the future and consider any concerns about wider environmental issues which may affect the town

If there is not enough information available, you could carry out a survey of the town to fill the gaps. A map of the distinctive areas may be a useful way to get a full picture.

## 2; Getting the following information will help you decide what is special about the environment of the area

Starting points for information	Information you will need	Answers and notes
<b>Sub-section 1: Description of the environmental features of the area</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maps or aerial photographs</li> <li>• Local knowledge</li> </ul>	<p>Q 1 Where is the town situated within the local landscape?</p> <p><i>For example, is the town in a valley, in the open countryside, or alongside a river?</i></p>	<p>Staplehurst is situated in the open countryside in the low-lying Weald of Kent. It is a ribbon development that lies south of Maidstone and north of Cranbrook on the A229 which is a Roman Road.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maps or aerial photographs</li> <li>• Local survey</li> </ul>	<p>Q 2 What are the distinctive features that define the limits of the town?</p> <p><i>For example, are there historic city walls, or a river or bypass?</i></p> <p>(Worksheets S5 Q6 and S6 Q6 also refer to environmental features and local distinctiveness).</p>	<p>The village is not bound by rivers or any outstanding features. The railway line which runs east-west at the northern end of the locality provides a “boundary line” although there are residential properties beyond this line that would be considered part of Staplehurst and fall within the parish boundary. Otherwise, the locality is surrounded by farmland and some ancient woodland. A parish boundary map and local plan map demonstrating this are available.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local survey</li> <li>• District Council (ask for: Conservation Areas, Local Plan, Design Statement, Tree Preservation Orders)</li> </ul>	<p>Q 3 Landmarks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where are the town’s natural environmental landmarks (for example, groups of trees, parkland, and nature areas)?</li> <li>Are they protected or well maintained?</li> </ol> <p>(Worksheets S5 Q6 and S6 Q6 also refer to environmental features and local distinctiveness).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are numerous open spaces, ponds and nature areas around the locality although none could be considered a particularly significant environmental landmark. There is a conservation area.</li> <li>There is an in depth up to date file held in the parish office which contains all of the many Tree preservation Orders in and around the area. The file includes designated individual trees, groups of trees and woodlands. There conservation area within the village protected by planning policy although its full extent is not obvious.</li> </ol>

Starting points for information	Information you will need	Answers and notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Wildlife Trust</li> <li>• Local Biodiversity Action Plan</li> </ul>	<p>Q 4 Biodiversity:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What areas are important for local biodiversity?</li> <li>b. What measures are in place to protect or enhance them?</li> </ol> <p><i>Consider, for example, bats, great crested newts, badgers, rare plants, insects or birds on the red list, or specific habitats.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The biodiversity in and around the village is substantial. It benefits from ideal wetland habitat and ditches which provide habitats for great crested newts. There are many areas which are ideal habitat for slow worms and other reptiles. Many of the farm buildings and older properties have valuable roosting sites for bats. With the introduction of agri-environmental schemes more farm land has improved and the populations of field birds have increased.</li> <li>b. Survey work has been carried out by the Kent Bat Group. Great crested newts are found in several locations around the village and are protected under UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP). Designated areas found within the area include: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Local nature reserves (LNR), Specific Leaf Areas (SLA), and National Nature Reserves (NNR).</li> </ol>
<b>Sub-section 2: Built features of the town</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maps</li> <li>• Aerial photographs</li> <li>• Local knowledge</li> </ul>	<p>Q 5 What is the shape and density of the town (that is, are buildings clustered together, dispersed or a mixture)?</p> <p>(Worksheets EC6 Q1; EC7 Q18; S2, S3 Q11; S5 Q8 and S6 Q1&amp; 3 also refer to the built environment).</p>	<p>Staplehurst is a straight-line development with the original and oldest buildings being around the Norman church and along the road to the north and south. There is also a mixture of fine houses and more humble dwellings as a result of the mediaeval and Tudor cloth industry. Staplehurst was then a wealthy prosperous village.</p> <p>Since the 1960's Staplehurst has expanded sideways and more than doubled the number of houses. There has been no expansion north of the railway line or south of The Quarter area.</p> <p>The housing is fairly dense with numerous old, more substantial houses situated in the open-countryside within the village boundaries.</p>

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Starting points for information	Information you will need	Answers and notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Council (ask for: Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Local Plans)</li> <li>• Town Design Statement</li> <li>• Local history group</li> <li>• Tourist Information Office</li> </ul>	<p>Q 6 Where are the town's distinctive built landmarks and conservation areas, and are they are in good condition?</p> <p>(Worksheet S6 Q6 also refers to local distinctiveness. Worksheets EC6 Q1; EC7 Q18; S2, S3 Q11;S5 Q8 and S6 Q1&amp; 3 also refer to the built environment).</p>	<p>Staplehurst has many outlying manor houses, including Iden Manor, Staplehurst Manor and Hush Heath Manor (the Italianate garden within the Manor garden is a designated SSSI), these buildings form part of the distinctive landmarks in the countryside around the village.</p> <p>Many of the Staplehurst's other distinctive houses are within the conservation area in the heart of the village, including All Saints Church, The Bell Inn, The Kings Head, Loddenden Manor, Blycourt Manor and the Elizabethan cottages along the High Street. Further south is a strong Victorian influence can be seen along Station Road, Headcorn Road and Marden Road as the village began to expand in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.</p> <p>These buildings and houses are in good condition and together with nature reserves in Bell Lane and Poyntell Road give plenty of scope for the visitor interested in history and the natural environment.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Council</li> </ul>	<p>Q 7 Development:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What are the areas where there are rundown or derelict buildings needing repair or restoration?</li> <li>b. What plans are there to revitalise or redevelop these areas/buildings?</li> </ol> <p>(Worksheets EC6 Q1; EC7 Q18; S2, S3 Q11;S5 Q8 and S6 Q1&amp; 3 also refer to the built environment. Worksheets EC6 Q1,8,9; S2; S5 Q10 and T1 Q3 also refer to development)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. There are no particular areas of residential, business or other groups of existing buildings which are run-down or derelict. There are brown field sites near the station. The various community halls are all aged and are perceived by some to lack sufficient range or quality of facilities to meet the needs of the burgeoning population.</li> <li>b. Regarding community buildings, there are no plans to further develop the Village Centre community building, although 68% of community survey respondents consider it is not fit for purpose and should be updated or redeveloped at the current site. The United Reformed Church has plans to further develop its site which may deliver improvements to the Margaret Howard Hall. The Free Church has demolished its building, the former village hall, but needs to raise significant funds before a new building can be developed.</li> </ol>

Starting points for information	Information you will need	Answers and notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District Council (ask for Local Plan proposal map)</li> </ul>	<p>Q 8 What is the range of uses of buildings in the town? <i>Are they, for example, for shopping, for housing, or used to provide employment?</i></p> <p>(Worksheets EC6 Q1; EC7 Q18; S2, S3 Q11; S5 Q8 and S6 Q1&amp; 3 also refer to the built environment)</p>	<p>The highest percentage of buildings in Staplehurst is domestic housing, most of which is owner occupied.</p> <p>There has been a gradual increase in the number of former houses on the main road which are now used as offices</p> <p>There has been a decline in the number of retail shops and an increase in the number of consumer services (estate agents, solicitors, food retail outlets, betting office). There has been a decline in the number of banks.</p> <p>Buildings used for retail and consumer shops make up the smallest percentage.</p> <p>83% of community survey respondents as at January 2008 (205 people) would like to see more development within the current boundary or within and beyond it.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local survey</li> <li>Town Design Statements</li> </ul>	<p>Q 9 Are the main routes into the town, including those from train and bus stations, attractive and in good condition?</p>	<p>The main routes into and through the town are attractive and generally in good condition. They are tree lined. The main road leading into and out of Staplehurst is a trunk road and has many problems including frequent use by large lorries, air pollution and high levels of noise. Speeding is a continual problem - the main road has a good width throughout, has very straight sections into the village at both the north and south entry points, and with houses set back from the main road, there is not a natural visual traffic calming effect.</p> <p>Staplehurst has a large mainline station used by a very large catchment area stretching to up to 10 miles beyond the village boundaries. The area around the station is unattractive and in poor condition. There is also a conflict problem with commuter traffic mixing with large industrial traffic and on-street commuter parking.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local survey</li> <li>• Town Design Statements</li> </ul>	<p>Q 10          Are the main pedestrian routes between car parks and the town centre attractive, well maintained, well lit, and safe to use (for example, with security CCTV cameras in use) both day and night?</p> <p>(Worksheets EC7 Q13,14 and T1;T2 &amp; T3 also refer to pedestrian access)</p>	<p>Most of Staplehurst's footpaths and pedestrian routes are well maintained and well-lit. There is 24 hour CCTV covering areas which suffer from occasional anti-social behaviour and in the main it is a safe environment to walk around both day and night. Some footpaths could be improved, e.g. from Bell Lane Car park to the Church.</p> <p>The main pedestrian route from the station to the town centre is beside the busy A229 highway.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local survey</li> <li>• District Council</li> <li>• Town Design Statements</li> </ul>	<p>Q 11 Are street fittings and fixtures in the town well located and in good condition?</p> <p><i>Look, for example, for cracked pavements, vandalized phone boxes, graffiti-covered walls, and overflowing or insufficient waste bins.</i></p> <p>(Worksheets EC6 Q1; EC7 Q18; S2, S3 Q11;S5 Q8 and S6 Q1&amp; 3 also refer to the built environment. WorksheetsEC7 Q10,17,18; S3 Q7,11 also refer to environmental quality)</p>	<p>Staplehurst has well located street fittings and fixtures, which are in the main in good condition. Most pavements are free from cracks and damage, although pavement parking is commonplace and some areas do need attention.</p> <p>The village does suffer periodic problems with graffiti and vandalism.</p> <p>There are sufficient waste bins around the village which are emptied regularly.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local survey</li> <li>• Town Design Statements</li> </ul>	<p>Q 12 Which areas of the town are over-cluttered with signs, street furniture, advertising hoardings, etc?</p> <p>(Worksheets EC6 Q1; EC7 Q18; S2, S3 Q11;S5 Q8 and S6 Q1&amp; 3 also refer to the built environment. WorksheetsEC7 Q10,17,18; S3 Q7,11 also refer to environmental quality)</p>	<p>None. The village would benefit from more signposting of key public buildings and areas.</p>

Sub-section 3: Environmental issues for the town		
Starting points for information	Information you will need	Answers and notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local survey</li> <li>District Council (ask for Local Plan and Town Design Statements)</li> </ul>	<p>Q 13</p> <p>The town's environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the environmental issues facing the town?</li> <li>What plans are there to deal with them?</li> </ol> <p><i>Look, for example, at flooding, air and noise pollution, etc.</i></p> <p>(Worksheets EC7 Q10,17,18; S3 Q7,11 also refer to environmental quality)</p>	<p>a) Noise, air pollution from heavy traffic and speeding through the centre of the village. Staplehurst also suffers from flooding of outlying rivers and over-flowing of its drainage system during excessive rain-fall.</p> <p>b) The Environment Agency and Highways Authority periodically attend to the areas of the village under threat from flooding. There are no plans to deal with traffic or speeding.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local survey</li> <li>District Council (ask for Local Plan and Town Design Statements)-</li> </ul>	<p>Q 14</p> <p>Brown field land:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What brown field land is available for building?</li> <li>Is this available land being considered in planning decisions?</li> </ol> <p>(Worksheets EC7 Q10, 17, 18; S3 Q7, 11 also refer to environmental quality. Worksheets EC6 Q1,8,9; S2; S5 Q10 and T1 Q3 also refer to development)</p>	<p>Land around the railway station to the west of the Lodge Road industrial estate is available and has been/is being considered for further development.</p> <p>There are frequent change of use/planning applications for conversion/use of redundant farm buildings.</p> <p>Planning applications for small-scale, infill housing developments on gardens are common.</p> <p>The Free Church has planning permission for redevelopment of its currently vacant site.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District Council conservation officer</li> <li>Town Design Statement</li> </ul>	<p>Q 15</p> <p>What townscape or heritage initiatives are there?</p> <p><i>Examples may include: Historic Economic Regeneration Scheme, Local Heritage Initiatives, and Conservation Areas.</i></p> <p>(Worksheets EC6 Q1; EC7 Q18; S2, S3 Q11;S5 Q8 and S6 Q1&amp; 3 also refer to the built environment)</p>	<p>The Staplehurst Conservation Area is designated and continually monitored by planning policy, but there are no initiatives delivering new benefits at present.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local planning office</li> </ul>	<p>Q15</p> <p>What land and buildings that could help the town's initiatives are</p>	<p>There are various sites owned by the local councils. There is a</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estate Agents</li> <li>• Local council Offices</li> </ul>	<p>available for purchase (and are they at affordable prices?)</p> <p>(Worksheets EC6 Q1; EC7 Q18; S2, S3 Q11; S5 Q8 and S6 Q1&amp; 3 also refer to the built environment)</p>	<p>Parish Council initiative developing sports changing rooms on Jubilee playing field. There is a resident-led initiative to develop a community café on land adjacent to the public library owned by the County Council.</p> <p>There is a Parish Council initiative to secure land to replace the allotments lost to the Housing Association.</p> <p>Various privately owned sites come on the market from time to time, although the current trend is for these to be sold with planning permission for housing development to secure maximum profit. Such sites include, at the time of writing, the Texaco Garage and the Parisfield private house.</p> <p>The Housing Association is currently developing housing on one site within the area and has plans for a second site.</p>
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3: This part is called a SWOT analysis, where you identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Once you have the information, use this table to show the Strengths and Weaknesses in the environmental character and condition of the area. Also flag up where there are Opportunities to improve things or where there might be Threats in the future. The conclusions give the basis for a summary that can go forward to the Healthcheck Report.

You need to consider what the information you have gathered tells you in the light of these questions:	Write your answers here. Base them on the information you have gathered:	Conclusion					
		It's a Fact	Strength	Weakness	Opportunity	Threat	Need more info
Does the town make the most of its natural environmental features? If there are opportunities for improvements to areas, what/where are they?	<p>No, the village of Staplehurst does not necessarily make the most of its environment. It is blighted by the A229 which cuts through it. The village is of a size where diversity is achievable. Encouraging residents in the importance of what they have is of paramount importance. Local people and those incomers are keen to maintain the environment in which they live. The countryside is a <u>strength</u> which brings new families to the area. People, unfortunately, do not realise what they have in front of them, and therefore ignore or show disrespect for what they have around them. Public awareness is a <u>weakness</u> which needs to be addressed.</p> <p>Government is pushing bio-diversity to combat climate change and for those living in the countryside there is the <u>opportunity</u> for these endeavours to be furthered. Better education in the field can also be introduced. Getting residents involved in local environmental groups such as the Footpath group and starting up a 'Green Gym' initiative will also encourage people in understanding and appreciating the countryside and the environment in which they live. However, disinterest in the local environment from residents is a <u>threat</u>. Many people view Staplehurst as a dormitory and show little respect for the local environment and countryside that surrounds them.</p>		X	X	X		

<p>Does the town have vitality and character, and does it keep its distinctive buildings and streets in good repair and in use? If not, what could be improved?</p>	<p>Yes. More money could be spent in maintaining the integrity of the village environment Staplehurst has a wealth of historical and interesting buildings which is a <u>strength</u>. There is a village centre walking route leaflet which is not promoted; this is an opportunity. Many people move here for the diversity and history, as well as for the good access to London/ Ashford etc. The fact that the A229 transects the village has a huge detrimental knock-on effect on the buildings and infrastructure of the village which is a <u>weakness</u>. The increase in traffic has affected the wellbeing of the residents and character of the built environment.</p> <p>Many respondents to the local survey are interested in pursuing the idea of a by-pass. This is an <u>opportunity</u> that would alleviate the strain on the centre of Staplehurst and which would potentially result in a better quality of life for all residents and buildings. The negative impact on trade in the area would though be a <u>threat</u>. An extension of the conservation area is also an <u>opportunity</u> for getting more protection to valuable buildings and land. Continuing increases in traffic, increases in building on gardens within the conservation area and potential for loss of village amenities to parking are all <u>threats</u>.</p>		<p>X X</p>	<p>X</p>		<p>X  X X  X</p>	
<p>Are there any major environmental concerns being addressed and planned for? Are there any gaps?</p>	<p>No. There is a <u>strong</u> Parish Council which aims to protect and conserve the local environment for all concerned. Some of the local population seems, at times, disinterested in the environment around them which is a <u>weakness</u>, as is the cost of implementing any environmental improvements schemes that might be proposed. More environmental initiatives with central government backing are coming on line and there may be <u>opportunities</u> for the village to apply for and obtain grants. Changes in government policy, for example more housing development, do present a <u>threat</u>.</p>		<p>X</p>		<p>X  X</p>	<p>X</p>	

## WORKSHEET EN2: THE TOWN & THE WIDER COUNTRYSIDE

**Task:** to record the quality of the town's surrounding countryside, how it is changing and the links it has with the town

### 1: Introduction to the task

Market towns and their surrounding countryside are linked both visually and physically. Most of the practical links between the town and its surrounding countryside (hinterland) are based on the town's traditional role as marketplace, shopping centre and the source of necessary local services for those living in the area. It is important for market towns to appreciate the changes happening in the countryside and to be able to adjust their services and facilities to meet changing needs. During this task try to:

- Identify the important present and past features that link the residents of town and countryside residents and what they do for a living
- Assess the impact of management practices on the quality of the countryside
- Where appropriate make links to Worksheet T2: Accessibility of services

If your County Council has not already carried out a landscape assessment of the surrounding countryside, you could map your own findings to help people understand the character of the surrounding countryside.

## 2: Getting the following information will help you define the environmental links between the town and countryside

Starting points for information	Information you will need	Answers and notes
<b>Sub-section 1: Links between town and countryside</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maps or aerial photographs</li> <li>• Local survey</li> </ul>	<p>Q 1 What is the location and impact of any natural or man-made features such as rivers, canals, roads or railway lines that physically or visually link the town and country?</p> <p>(Worksheets EC6 Q1; EC7 Q18; S2, S3 Q11; S5 Q8 and S6 Q1&amp; 3 also refer to the built environment. Worksheets S5 Q6; S6 Q5 also refer to environmental features)</p>	<p>Staplehurst Station is located south of the village, just off the A229. A beneficial impact of the railway is that it physically links Staplehurst to the neighbouring villages of Marden and Headcorn and also links residents with the larger towns of Ashford and Canterbury to the east and Tonbridge, Tunbridge wells, Sevenoaks and London to the west. The negative impact of the railway station on Staplehurst is to create large volumes of traffic morning and evening, and associated parking issues, as many commuters come from outside the village.</p> <p>The feature that has the most impact on Staplehurst and its community is the A229. This main trunk route carries heavy traffic all day and cuts the village in half, east/west. There are also busy thoroughfares leading from Marden in the west to Headcorn in the east, which cuts across the north/south A229 at a set of traffic lights. Traffic congestion, particularly in the summer, but also daily in the morning and afternoon, causes noise and air-pollution from exhaust fumes, particularly affecting households along both sides of the A229 from the railway line in the north to the Quarter in the south. There is also an impact on the safety of pedestrians in the centre of the village with speeding lorries and vehicles.</p> <p>There have been traffic surveys carried out by KCC highways, these surveys have been done along the Maidstone Road – heading north; the Cranbrook Road – heading south; Headcorn Road – heading east and Marden Road – heading west.</p> <p>The hill to the south of the village creates a viewpoint which naturally links the village to the countryside.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local survey</li> </ul>	<p>Q 2 Are there unique design elements found in both the town and the surrounding countryside?</p> <p><i>Look, for example, at distinctive local house types, local architectural detailing and use of local materials.</i></p> <p>(Worksheets EC6 Q1; EC7 Q18; S2, S3 Q11; S5 Q8 and S6 Q1&amp; 3 also refer to the built environment. Worksheet S6 Q5 also refers to local distinctiveness)</p>	<p>The design elements unique to Staplehurst are one and two storey housing made from local materials, i.e. white-painted weatherboard exterior walls and Kent peg-tiled roofs. The village is an excellent example of Low Weald landscape rich in ancient hedgerow and typical field margins and fencing.</p>

Starting points for information	Information you will need	Answers and notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local survey</li> <li>• Local Tourist Board</li> <li>• Maps</li> </ul>	<p>Q 3 What are the memorable views either from the town to the countryside or from the countryside to the town, and where can they be seen from?</p> <p>(Worksheet S6 Q5 also refers to local distinctiveness)</p>	<p>From the top of Church Hill, towards the south into countryside and to the north through the village.</p> <p>Coming into the village from the south, looking up the hill toward the church and historical houses.</p> <p>Approaching the village from the east you cross two bridges, one over the River Beult and the other over the railway.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local knowledge</li> <li>• Local History Group</li> <li>• Local Tourist Board</li> <li>• Library</li> </ul>	<p>Q 4 What historic commercial links such as market halls, a corn exchange, mills, wharves, market squares between the town and country are still evident?</p> <p>(Worksheets EC6 Q1; EC7 Q18; S2, S3 Q11; S5 Q8 and S6 Q1&amp; 3 also refer to the built environment. Worksheet S6 Q5 also refers to local distinctiveness)</p>	<p>The A229 is a Roman Road running the entire length of the village; a watermill and old medieval houses associated with weaving.</p> <p>Otherwise there are no particular commercial links of buildings still evident.</p>
<p>Local survey</p>	<p>Q 5 Does the character of the surrounding countryside become less distinct the closer it gets to the town edge?</p> <p>(Worksheets S5 Q6; S6 Q5 also refer to environmental features. Worksheet S6 Q5 also refers to local distinctiveness)</p>	<p>In a north/south direction the village blends gently into the countryside. However, in an east/west direction the countryside ends abruptly with the housing developments.</p>

Sub-section 2: Countryside landscape character		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County Council (ask for landscape character assessment)</li> </ul>	<p>Q 6 What are the unique characteristics of the local countryside?</p> <p><i>Look, for example, at farmed land, heath or moorland, open, small fields with hedgerows or dry stone walls, and traditional settlements.</i></p> <p>(Worksheets S5 Q6; S6 Q5 also refer to environmental features. Worksheet S6 Q5 also refers to local distinctiveness)</p>	<p>90% of the parish is farming land. No point in the village is more than a few minutes away from footpaths and we have good access to fields and woods. The land is predominantly flat with hedgerows and trees.</p>

Starting points for information	Information you will need	Answers and notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Council (ask for Local Plan)</li> <li>• County Council</li> <li>• English Nature</li> <li>• Local Wildlife Trust</li> </ul>	<p>Q 7 What areas are covered by national, regional or local landscape, conservation or wildlife designations such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Parks</li> <li>• Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)</li> <li>• RAMSAR</li> <li>• Special Protection Areas</li> <li>• Special Areas of Conservation</li> <li>• National Nature Reserves (NNR)</li> <li>• Local Nature Reserves (LNR)</li> <li>• Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)</li> <li>• Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation</li> </ul> <p>(Worksheet EC7 Q10,17,18; S3 Q7,11 also refer to environmental quality)</p>	<p>Staplehurst has areas with the following designations:</p> <p>NNR – ditches and ponds</p> <p>LNR – unimproved grassland and seasonal ponds</p> <p>SLA – large areas of the countryside are designated as SLA's</p> <p>Hush Heath Manor has an area which is designated SSSI.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Council (ask for: Local Plans, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, archaeologically important areas, Historic Parks and Gardens)</li> <li>• English Heritage</li> </ul>	<p>Q 8 Areas of historic importance:</p> <p>a. What areas of historic importance have concentrations of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listed Buildings</li> <li>• Conservation Areas</li> <li>• historic parkland</li> <li>• Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM)</li> <li>• Areas of Archaeological Importance</li> </ul> <p>b. What other areas of historic importance are there?</p> <p>(Worksheets EC6 Q1; EC7 Q18; S2, S3 Q11;S5 Q8 and S6 Q1&amp;3 also refer to the built environment. Worksheets S5 Q6; S6 Q5 also refer to environmental features)</p>	<p>a. The village has a central conservation area, including shops, trees, houses etc. There are two other conservation areas – Bell Lane and Poyntell Road. Many listed properties through the parish.</p> <p>b. Other notable features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The ancient Martyrs memorial</li> <li>- Norman Door at the parish church</li> <li>- Roman Opidom to south of village</li> <li>- Lovehurst Manor moat.</li> <li>- Maplehurst Mill River System.</li> <li>- Archaeological site of Roman remains near and on Brattle Farm – Simeon ware found.</li> </ul>

Starting points for information	Information you will need	Answers and notes
<b>Sub-section 3: Countryside landscape quality, use &amp; management</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County Council</li> <li>• Dept for Environment, Food &amp; Rural Affairs (DEFRA). (Ask regional office)</li> </ul>	<p>Q 9 Land:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What are the proportions of agricultural land at Grade 1, 2 or 3a?</li> <li>b. Where are they?</li> </ol>	<p>All of the farm land in and around the village of Staplehurst is Grade 3a.</p> <p>Surrounding the village of Staplehurst and Frittenden – total hinterland is farmed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DEFRA for current schemes)</li> <li>• Environment Agency</li> <li>• County Council</li> </ul>	<p>Q 10 What areas of the countryside are being managed through national agri-environment schemes? Current schemes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Countryside Stewardship Scheme</li> <li>• Environmentally Sensitive Areas</li> <li>• Nitrate Sensitive Areas</li> <li>• Habitat Scheme</li> <li>• Moorland Scheme</li> <li>• Organic Aid Scheme</li> <li>• Countryside Access Scheme</li> </ul> <p>(Worksheet EC7 Q10,17,18; S3 Q7,11 also refer to environmental quality)</p>	<p>The following agri – environmental schemes are at present being used by farmers and land owners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Countryside Stewardship Scheme</li> <li>- Some Environmental Stewardship – Organic Entry level</li> <li>- Set-a-side being brought back into production</li> </ul>

Starting points for information	Information you will need	Answers and notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet (local community network)</li> <li>• Library</li> <li>• Local Wildlife Trust</li> <li>• British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV)</li> </ul>	<p>Q 11 Groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How do community and voluntary groups participate in the management of the local countryside?</li> <li>b. How do they contribute to the towns and surrounding countryside's conservation?</li> </ol> <p>(Worksheets EC2 Q5; EC3 Q10; S4; S6 also refer to community involvement)</p>	<p>a. There is a village clean-up once a year. There is a village caretaker paid for by the Parish Council. There is also an active Footpath Group. There is volunteer involvement in maintaining local nature reserves.</p> <p>b. Local farmers work toward keeping hedges and farms well managed, keeping village ditches, etc., clean once a year and Footpath Group keeps paths open by using them and mending them.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business directory</li> <li>• Local knowledge</li> </ul>	<p>Q 12 Is there a horticulture or market gardening industry on the outskirts of the town which supplies the town markets?</p> <p><i>If yes, identify proportionally how much they do supply.</i></p> <p>(Worksheets EC2 Q2,3; EC5; also refer to land-based industries)</p>	<p>Iden Park Herb Garden; 3 Farm Shops; several garden centres/nurseries within and near the parish – well used by villagers.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soil Association (look at organic farmers and growers)</li> <li>• Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF)</li> </ul>	<p>Q 13 How many local agricultural or horticultural produce businesses are certified organic producers or members of other environmental standards schemes?</p> <p>(Worksheets EC2 Q2, 3; EC5; also refer to land-based industries. Worksheets EC7 Q12; S5 Q9 also refer to food)</p>	<p>None identified.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Council Local Plan</li> </ul>	<p>Q 14 Changes: Are there plans for future major change on the urban edge? What are they and when are they planned for? What landscape impacts might they to have?</p> <p>Look, for example, at community forest land, etc.</p>	<p>The local plan is under review and due to be published shortly, but no significant changes are expected in the Parish in the short term. The Borough Council 'core strategy' may include a requirement to develop a significant quantity of houses in the area to meet government targets, but details are not yet known.</p>



<p>Looking at the quality of the surrounding countryside, its sensitive areas and its potential, are any areas in need of support/strengthening?</p>	<p>Yes. There is a thriving farming community which protects, enhances and conserves the countryside. Local people are generally in tune and aware of the importance of the countryside; they do use the footpaths and bridle ways. The countryside is always under <u>threat</u> from development. The local Borough Council is under pressure from government to increase new housing provision. The need to provide food may in time over-ride this demand. Another <u>threat</u> could be the growing of mono culture crops such as bio fuels, which may reduce the bio-diversity of the countryside</p> <p>The countryside could be viewed as <u>weak</u> inasmuch as it is down to the land owner to work the land and make a profit from it. Land is subject to trends and economic fluctuations. The <u>opportunity</u> to protect the countryside through different schemes is possible and should be exploited. New stewardship schemes are coming on line and local land owners should and are taking them on in order to preserve and use the land to its optimum.</p>				X	X	
<p>What are the changes that are happening in the surrounding countryside and how well these are being managed? How can the market town help with these changes to management practices?</p>	<p>Staplehurst is surrounded by a rolling diverse and interesting landscape which should be protected for its own sake. Even though there are no SSSI's there is an <u>opportunity</u> to get important SLA and LNR sites better protected and enhanced. The village has a thriving Great Crested Newt population which is protected by EU legislation, but which does come under <u>threat</u> from development. The landscape is important to the wellbeing of all the biodiversity that lives within it.</p>				X		
<p>What potential is there to increase the extent of community involvement in the management and conservation of the countryside?</p>	<p>Encourage walking groups/care of conservation areas, i.e. Bell Lane/Poyntell Road – more people involved. There is concern that the local privately-owned farming museum could be lost in time.</p> <p>Many community survey respondents consider that there is a good sense of community, but that this could be strengthened further.</p>			X	X		

## WORKSHEET EN3: THE ENVIRONMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE

**Task:** to establish the effects of the quality of the town's and countryside's environment on the quality of life.

### **1: Introduction to the task**

The way people live and work has an impact on the quality of the environment. Many people now want to “do their bit for the environment”, particularly in their own local area. This task will help you to consider:

- *How and where residents can use or support environmentally friendly initiatives*
- *How and where community members interact with their environment for leisure and recreation*
- *Where appropriate make links to Worksheets*
  - *T2: Accessibility of services*
  - *S5: Sport, Leisure and Open Spaces*
  - *T3: Ease of Movement around the Town*

## 2: Getting the following information will help you review how environmental quality could be enhanced to improve peoples' quality of life

Starting points for information	Information you need	Information
<b>Sub-section 1: Environmental sustainability</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Council</li> <li>• Local community group</li> <li>• Charity schemes</li> </ul>	<p>Q 1 What opportunities are there for people to understand and become active in reducing or managing waste? Include sustainable waste management such as collection points, facilities and support offered, and consider local schemes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recycle</li> <li>re-use</li> <li>• produce bio-gas energy</li> <li>• compost organic waste</li> </ul> <p>(Worksheets EC2 Q5; EC3 Q10; S4; S6 also refer to community involvement)</p>	<p>There is door-to-door collection by the Borough Council of paper for recycling, which raises awareness. This is to be increased in the range of materials collected for recycling in Spring 2009.</p> <p>A local survey has identified an interest in recycling facilities being increased and/or emptied more frequently (59% of respondents). There is demand for plastic recycling; this is planned by Maidstone Borough to commence in Spring 2009.</p> <p>There is increasing use and awareness of the option to purchase garden waste wheelie bins.</p> <p>There is a trend amongst local people to buy produce from local sources to reduce waste and emissions. This is compelled by national/global issues/awareness rather than any local campaigns.</p> <p>A local architect is developing an eco-friendly house and is providing talks and visits to local people.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Authority</li> </ul>	<p>Q 2 How are energy conservation methods and local renewable energy sources used within the town and the surrounding countryside?</p>	<p>None at present.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Authority</li> </ul>	<p>Q 3 Low carbon initiatives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What initiatives are in operation for the town to become a low carbon area?</li> <li>b. How are these initiatives contributing to improved air quality, health and creation of employment opportunities?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. None</li> <li>b. n/a</li> </ol>

Starting points for information	Information you will need	Answers and notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Authority Planning Dept</li> <li>Local builders</li> </ul>	<p>Q 4 What use is being made of sustainable building materials for new buildings within the town?</p> <p>(Worksheets EC6 Q1; EC7 Q18; S2, S3 Q11; S5 Q8 and S6 Q1 &amp; 3 also refer to the built environment)</p>	<p>None other than at the initiative of the architect/developer. A single eco-house recently developed within the village has attracted significant publicity and drive-by visitors.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local survey</li> </ul>	<p>Q 5 Where goods and products from the local countryside are produced, how many of them carry a local Environmental Quality Mark (EQM)?</p> <p>(Worksheets EC7 Q10, 17, 18; S3 Q7, 11 also refer to environmental quality. Worksheets EC2 Q2, 3; EC5; also refer to land-based industries. Worksheets EC7 Q12; S5 Q9 also refer to food)</p>	<p>No farms or other operations are believed to have EQM status.</p>
<b>Sub-section 2: Quality of life through leisure and recreation</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Authority</li> </ul>	<p>Q 6 Do community open spaces, sites and facilities currently available for informal recreation and amenity meet the needs of the local people?</p> <p>(Worksheets EC7 Q10, 17, 18; S3 Q7, 11 also refer to environmental quality. Worksheet S5 refers to open space. Worksheets EC7 Q13; S5; S6; T3 Q17 also refer to recreation &amp; leisure)</p>	<p>Yes - There are several open spaces, playing fields, etc., for the younger people – sports fields, playground areas and areas suitable for walking dogs.</p> <p>There are no community spaces particularly suitable for walking and sitting, etc., especially for the elderly, though there is opportunity.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Authority</li> <li>Local survey</li> <li>Tourist or Visitor Information Centre</li> </ul>	<p>Q 7 What recreation routes for walking and cycling are available to local people?</p> <p>(Worksheet EC7 Q13,14; T1 Q5; T2 Q6; T3 also refer to pedestrian access ; Worksheets EC7 Q13; S5; S6; T3 Q17 also refer to recreation &amp; leisure)</p>	<p>There are many public footpaths, through various types of countryside and woodland. The village has one short cycle path linking an estate to the station.</p>

**3:** This part is called a SWOT analysis, where you identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Once you have the information, use this table to show the Strengths and Weaknesses in the ways that contribute to a better environment for all. Also flag up where there are Opportunities to improve things or where there might be Threats in the future. The conclusions give the basis for a summary that can go forward to the Healthcheck Report.

You need to consider what the information you have gathered tells you in the light of these questions:	Write your answers here. Base them on the information you have gathered:	Conclusion					
		It's a Fact	Strength	Weakness	Opportunity	Threat	Need more info
To what extent do people fully consider promoting and supporting environmentally sustainable initiatives? Are there any gaps or opportunities to extend these actions?	Support for recycling throughout the village. Footpath Group is active. The farmers are involved. Some resistance to recent eco-house development.		X				
What improvements could be made in amenities such as open spaces, sites, routes and facilities for informal recreation that enhance the quality of life for local people be made? Are there any potential open spaces or sites that could be developed?	Gardens for elderly – Church Green/Reeves Close. Frequent comment by residents about the poor state and appearance of the Parade area, especially the planting beds.  Many community survey respondents consider that there is a good sense of community, but that this could be strengthened further. Many residents are concerned about the volume of litter and antisocial behaviour.			X			