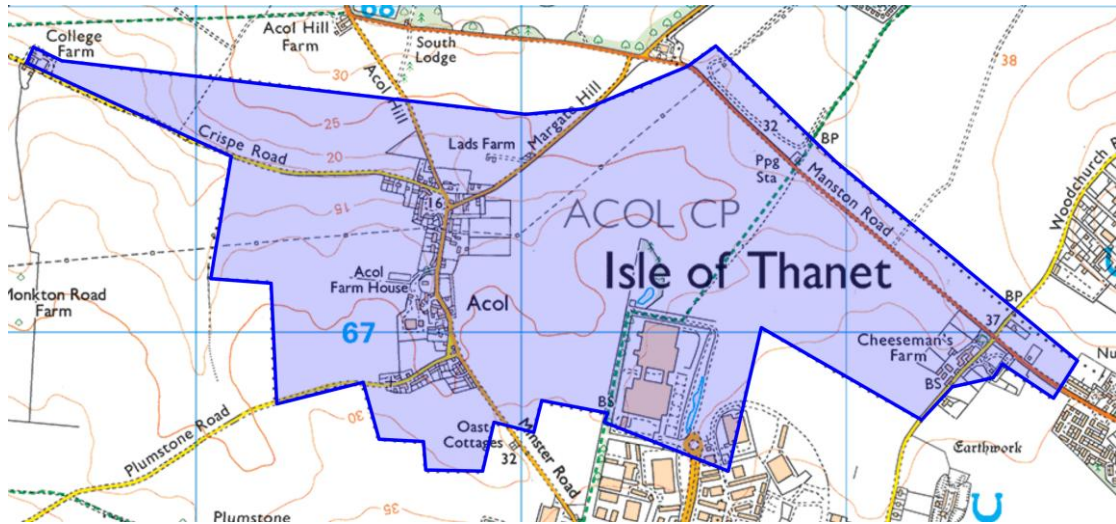




Acol Neighbourhood Plan **2026–2041**

(Regulation 14 Consultation Draft)



Revision History

17 th January 2024	Residents Survey
2 nd June 2026	
8 th June 2026	
10 th July 2026	
23 rd July 2026	
29 th October 2026	



Acol Neighbourhood Plan 2026-2041 (Regulation 14 Consultation Draft)

Foreword

This Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by Acol Parish Council on behalf of the community. It reflects the views expressed in the **2024 Acol Household Survey**, public meetings, and ongoing engagement with residents. The Plan aims to protect Acol's rural identity, improve safety, strengthen community life, and ensure that any development is sustainable and appropriate to the village's scale and character.

The community also supports strategic transport improvements, including the A28 North Thanet Link Road, which is expected to reduce traffic pressure on Acol's rural lanes and improve connectivity across Thanet.ⁱ

This is the **Regulation 14 Consultation Draft**, published for comment by residents, statutory bodies, and stakeholders.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan

The Acol Neighbourhood Plan provides a locally-specific planning framework for the village for the period **2026–2041**. Once adopted, it will form part of the statutory development plan for Thanet and will be used to determine planning applications in Acol.

1.2 Relationship with the Thanet Local Plan

The Plan has been prepared to be in **general conformity** with the **Thanet Local Plan (Adopted 2020)**. It does not alter district-wide housing numbers or strategic site allocations. Instead, it provides **local detail** on:

- rural character and settlement separation
- water resource constraints
- road safety and active travel
- sustainable design
- community facilities
- public transport access

These are areas where Acol's circumstances require a more tailored approach than district-level policy alone can provide.



Acol Neighbourhood Plan 2026-2041 (Regulation 14 Consultation Draft)

1.3 How the Plan Was Prepared

The Plan is based on:

- The **2024 Acol Household Survey**
- Parish Council workshops
- Public meetings at the Village Hall
- Evidence from Thanet District Council and Kent County Council
- The Thanet Local Plan and NPPF

2. Acol Today

2.1 A Distinct Rural Village

Acol is a small, discreet rural settlement with deep agricultural roots. Although most residents no longer work in farming, the village's identity remains tied to its surrounding farmland and open landscape.

2.2 Key Characteristics

- Acol is surrounded by **agricultural land**, forming a clear green boundary.
- Roads are **narrow former cart tracks**, now carrying high traffic volumes.
- There are **no footpaths**, creating significant safety concerns.
- The **Village Hall** is the only social hub.
- The **Recreation Ground** is underused due to unsafe access.
- Public transport is extremely limited.
- The population includes a high proportion of older residents.

2.3 Community Priorities (from 2024 Survey)

Residents identified the following as top priorities:

- Protecting rural character
- Improving road safety
- Reducing traffic speed
- Enhancing community facilities



Acol Neighbourhood Plan 2026-2041 (Regulation 14 Consultation Draft)

- Improving access to the Recreation Ground
- Ensuring sustainable development
- Improving public transport links
- Supporting strategic transport improvements, including the A28 North Thanet Link Road, to reduce traffic pressure on Acol's rural lanes and improve connectivity.

3. Vision and Objectives

Vision for Acol in 2041

Acol will remain a distinct rural village, protected by its agricultural setting and green boundaries. Development will be small-scale, sustainable, and sensitive to the village's historic character. Acol will be safer for pedestrians, better connected to Thanet, and supported by strong community facilities that enhance wellbeing and social cohesion.

Objectives

1. Protect Acol's rural character and prevent coalescence with neighbouring settlements.
2. Ensure water resources and drainage infrastructure are not compromised.
3. Improve road safety and create safe pedestrian and cycling routes.
4. Promote sustainable, low-carbon development.
5. Strengthen community facilities and improve access to the Recreation Ground.
6. Improve public transport access and connectivity across Thanet.
7. Align with the strategic policies of the Thanet Local Plan.

4. Planning Policies

Each policy includes a justification and a link to relevant Thanet Local Plan policies.

Policy A1 – Protection of Rural Setting and Green Boundary

Development will be supported only where it:

- Maintains the existing village envelope.
- Preserves the agricultural setting and key views.



Acol Neighbourhood Plan 2026-2041 (Regulation 14 Consultation Draft)

- Avoids coalescence with Birchington, Manston, or other settlements.
- Reflects Acol's rural scale, form, and materials.

Justification: Residents strongly value Acol's rural identity. This policy supports **Thanet Local Plan SP01 (Spatial Strategy)** and **SP22 (Countryside)**.ⁱⁱ

Policy A2 – Water Resource Protection and Efficiency

Development must demonstrate:

- Adequate water supply without harming existing provision.
- High water-efficiency standards.
- Use of SuDS appropriate to local soil conditions.
- No increase in surface water run-off.

Justification: Acol has limited water resources and drainage capacity. This policy aligns with **SE04 (Water Efficiency)** and **SE05 (SuDS)**.ⁱⁱⁱ

Policy A3 – Road Safety and Active Travel

Acol Parish Council and its community strongly support the delivery of the A28 North Thanet Link Road, as set out in Kent County Council's published scheme plans. The Link Road is expected to reduce traffic pressure on rural lanes around Acol, improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists, and enhance connectivity to Birchington, Westwood Cross, and wider Thanet. Its objectives align directly with Policy A3 by improving road safety, reducing through-traffic, and enabling safer active travel routes.

Development must:

- Contribute to safe pedestrian routes and new footpaths.
- Support a 20mph village-wide speed limit.^{iv}
- Avoid increasing through-traffic.
- Improve access to bus stops and key village destinations.
- Provide secure cycle storage.

Priority Projects:

- Footpath link to the Recreation Ground
- Traffic-calming measures
- Safer pedestrian access to Birchington and Quex Park



Acol Neighbourhood Plan 2026-2041 (Regulation 14 Consultation Draft)

Justification: Road danger is the community's top concern. This policy supports **TP01 (Transport)** and **TP03 (Walking and Cycling)**.^v

Policy A4 – Sustainable, Low-Carbon Development

All new buildings must:

- Meet or exceed Future Homes Standard.
- Incorporate solar PV, battery storage, and heat pumps unless unviable.
- Use high-performance insulation.
- Provide EV charging.
- Include at least two off-street parking spaces.

Justification: Residents support environmentally friendly development. This policy aligns with **SP23 (Climate Change)** and **QD01–QD04 (Design)**.^{vi}

Policy A5 – Housing Mix and Design

If housing is required by district policy, it must:

- Be small-scale and reflect Acol's rural character.
- Prioritise accessible homes for older residents.
- Support self-build where appropriate.
- Avoid development on farmland unless no alternative exists.

Justification: Residents oppose large-scale development. This policy supports **SP13 (Housing Provision)** and **H01 (Housing Mix)**.^{vii}

Policy A6 – Community Facilities and Social Cohesion

Development will be supported where it:

- Enhances or expands the Village Hall.
- Improves access to the Recreation Ground.
- Provides new community spaces.
- Supports activities that reduce isolation.

Justification: The Village Hall is central to community life. This policy aligns with **CM02 (Community Facilities)**.^{viii}

Policy A7 – Public Transport and Connectivity



Acol Neighbourhood Plan 2026-2041 (Regulation 14 Consultation Draft)

The Parish Council recognises that the A28 North Thanet Link Road includes proposals for improved bus priority and enhanced public transport reliability across the A28 corridor. These improvements will benefit Acol residents by strengthening connections to Birchington, Margate, and Westwood Cross. Policy A7 therefore supports the Link Road as a strategic transport investment that aligns with the Neighbourhood Plan's objective of improving public transport access.

Development must:

- Contribute to improved public transport access.^{ix}
- Support safe, accessible bus stops.
- Facilitate demand-responsive or community transport schemes.

Justification: Acol is poorly served by public transport. This policy supports **TP02 (Public Transport)**.^x

5. Community Actions (Non-Policy)

These are not planning policies but actions the Parish Council will pursue:

- Work with KCC to deliver a 20mph limit. (See endnote i.)
- Improve street cleaning and litter management.
- Promote Village Hall activities.
- Support health outreach services.
- Develop a community transport scheme.
- Improve pedestrian access to Quex Park.
- Enhance village planting and beautification.
- **Support the delivery of the A28 North Thanet Link Road**, working with Kent County Council and Thanet District Council to ensure that the scheme delivers safety benefits for Acol, reduces through-traffic on rural lanes, and improves public transport connectivity.

6. Implementation and Monitoring

The Parish Council will:

- Review progress annually.



Acol Neighbourhood Plan 2026-2041 (Regulation 14 Consultation Draft)

- Update the Plan every five years.
- Work with Thanet District Council, KCC, and community groups to deliver projects.

7. Consultation

This Regulation 14 draft is published for consultation with:

- Residents
- Local businesses
- Statutory consultees
- Neighbouring parishes
- Thanet District Council
- Kent County Council

Responses will be considered before preparing the Regulation 16 Submission Version.

ⁱ Kent County Council's A28 North Thanet Link Road is a planned strategic transport improvement designed to reduce congestion, improve safety, and enhance connectivity between Birchington, Westgate, and the wider Thanet area. The scheme includes junction upgrades, improved pedestrian and cycling provision, and measures to support more reliable public transport. Acol Parish Council and its community strongly support the scheme due to its potential to reduce traffic pressure on Acol's rural lanes and improve access to key destinations. Source: Kent County Council – *A28 North Thanet Link Road* (<https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-projects/planned-road-projects/a28-north-thanet-link#plans>)

ⁱⁱ Thanet Local Plan Policy SP01 (Spatial Strategy) directs major growth to strategic sites and larger settlements, protecting smaller rural villages such as Acol from significant development pressure. The policy supports maintaining settlement separation and avoiding coalescence, directly underpinning Acol's green boundary and rural identity.

ⁱⁱⁱ Thanet Local Plan Policies SE04 (Water Efficiency) and SE05 (Sustainable Drainage) require new development to demonstrate adequate water supply, incorporate water-saving measures, and use SuDS appropriate to local soil conditions. Acol's limited water resources and drainage constraints make these policies particularly relevant.

^{iv} Kent County Council's "Setting Local Speed Limits" policy (updated 2023–2026) allows 20mph limits to be introduced where there is clear evidence of community support, a history of collisions, or where vulnerable road users are at risk due to the absence of footways. Acol's narrow historic lanes, lack of pedestrian infrastructure, and strong community support (as evidenced in the 2024 Household Survey) meet these criteria. The 20mph scheme for Acol was formally approved by KCC Highways in November



Acol Neighbourhood Plan 2026-2041 (Regulation 14 Consultation Draft)

2025 following design and consultation, and implementation is pending due to the re-letting of a Highways Contract.

^v KCC’s “Active Travel Strategy” (2022–2030) prioritises improvements to pedestrian and cycling safety, especially in rural communities lacking footways. The strategy supports new footpaths, safer crossing points, and traffic-calming measures where they reduce risk to vulnerable road users. Acol’s absence of footways and high traffic volumes align directly with the strategy’s rural safety objectives.

^{vi} Thanet Local Plan Policy SP23 (Climate Change) and design policies QD01–QD04 require high standards of energy efficiency, support renewable energy technologies, and promote sustainable construction. Policy A4 builds on these requirements by specifying solar PV, heat pumps, battery storage, and EV charging for Acol.

^{vii} Thanet Local Plan Policies SP13 and SP14 set district-wide housing requirements and emphasise high-quality, sustainable development. Policy H01 requires a mix of housing types, including accessible homes. Acol’s policy A5 aligns with these strategic requirements while adding local detail on scale, accessibility, and rural character.

^{viii} Thanet Local Plan Policy CM02 protects existing community facilities and supports proposals that enhance local provision. Acol’s Village Hall and Recreation Ground are recognised as essential community assets, and Policy A6 aligns with CM02 by encouraging improvements and new social spaces.

^{ix} KCC’s Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP, 2021–2025) identifies rural villages with limited bus access as priority areas for improved connectivity, demand-responsive transport, and safer access to bus stops. Acol’s extremely limited public transport provision and unsafe pedestrian access to existing stops are consistent with BSIP’s rural accessibility criteria.

^x Thanet Local Plan Policy TP02 promotes improved public transport access and infrastructure. Acol’s extremely limited bus service and unsafe access to stops make this policy directly relevant to Policy A7’s requirement for development to support better connectivity.