



chilham parish council

serving chilham, old wives lees and shottenden

PO Box 983, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 9EA Email: clerk@chilhamparishcouncil.gov.uk

4 October 2017

Dear Parishioner:

SUBJECT: PARISH QUESTION TIME 2017 CONSULTATION REPORT AND POSITION
STATEMENT ON ASHFORD LOCAL PLAN TO 2030

2017 has been a busy year for the Parish Council. Back in the Spring we undertook our annual Parish Question Time consultation exercise, which you should have received through your doors. We were a little disappointed with the response rate and have been visiting a sample of households that did not respond to understand the reasons for this and how we can address them. We have nevertheless produced the enclosed Consultation Report based on the feedback received.

The other major piece of work this year has been the preparation of the Parish Council's response to the Ashford Local Plan consultation over the Summer. We recognise that planning can be a highly contentious and emotive subject and that not everybody agreed with the Council's final response. We have therefore produced the enclosed statement which sets out the reasoning behind our position which I would encourage you to read.

As ever, if the Parish Council can assist you in any way, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Sincerely,

Paul Lulham

Chairman, Chilham Parish Council



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Paul Lulham (Chairman); Steve Linter; Doug Marriott; Gill Schofield; Yve White



ASHFORD LOCAL PLAN 2030 “MAIN CHANGES” CONSULTATION – CHILHAM PARISH COUNCIL POSITION STATEMENT

This paper sets out Chilham Parish Council (CPC)’s position in respect to the Ashford Local Plan 2030 “Main Changes” consultation, which closed on 31st August 2017. It summarises the background to the Borough Council’s consultation exercise and the reasoning behind CPC’s formal response.

Like all Local Planning Authorities in England, Ashford Borough Council (ABC) has a statutory duty to prepare an up-to-date Local Plan that sets out strategic priorities for the development of the Borough, including land allocations and policies covering issues such as housing, employment, community services, environment and heritage. These planning policies are used by the Council in determining planning applications and taking enforcement action against unauthorised development. It is important that Parish Councils and local communities engage proactively and constructively in the Plan-making process.

ABC published its Regulation 19 draft Local Plan for public consultation in June 2016. This included a single proposal for change in Chilham Parish – for two executive dwellings on Land at Mulberry Hill, Old Wives Lees – to which the Parish Council raised an objection on the basis of highway safety and the unsustainable site location. The Borough Council has subsequently proposed a number of “Main Changes” to the Local Plan to address a range of issues raised during the public consultation, to ensure it is up-to-date, reflects the latest evidence base and meets the requirements of the latest national planning policy. The Ashford Local Plan 2030 “Main Changes” consultation was launched on 7th July 2017 and Chilham Parish Council held an Extraordinary Meeting to consider its formal response on 27th July.

The “Main Changes” to the Local Plan include a proposed new housing allocation on land at Branch Road, Chilham, which was the primary focus of the Extraordinary Meeting. The allocation is set out in Draft Policy S56:-

Policy S56 – Chilham, Branch Road

Land at Branch Road is proposed for residential development for up to 10 dwellings.

Development proposals for this site shall:-

- *Provide a car park of a minimum of 5 additional spaces for the use of the GP surgery;*
- *Be designed and laid out in such a way as to protect and conserve the character and setting of the village Conservation Area and the residential amenity of neighbouring dwellings, particularly listed buildings, whilst also taking into account the guidance in the Chilham Village Design Statement;*
- *Provide primary vehicle access to the residential area on Branch Road, as shown on the policies map and retain the current access for the GP surgery and associated parking;*
- *Include the provision of footpaths and/or traffic calming measures in Branch Road, in accordance with the recommendations of Kent Highways;*
- *Retain and enhance the hedge and tree boundaries within and around the site, and make enhancements to the southern boundary ensuring the setting of the AONB is preserved and the development is well screened from the wider area;*
- *Provide a connection to the nearest point of adequate capacity in the sewerage network, in collaboration with the service provider.*

The Parish Council’s Extraordinary Meeting was preceded by an Open Forum, during which members of the public provided feedback and asked questions. It was clear from the Open Forum that whilst immediate neighbours to the proposed site allocation had concerns regarding its potential impact on the setting of the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings, as well as the potential exacerbation of highway safety issues on Branch Road, there was a general acceptance amongst Parishioners and Councillors that Chilham has the capacity for modest additional housing growth. This acceptance was nevertheless conditional upon the necessary assurances from infrastructure providers that the proposed development can adequately mitigate its impacts in relation to school capacity, medical



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services etc. The Parish Council therefore undertook to seek this clarification from the appropriate bodies.

The outcome of the Extraordinary Meeting directly influenced the Parish Council's draft response to the "Main Changes" consultation, which was considered and agreed by the Council on 3rd August. This raised no objection in principle to the proposed allocation, subject to a number of important caveats which reflected the concerns that had been raised by local residents.

Further correspondence was subsequently received from residents, the GP surgery, Kent County Council Highways and Transportation, and ABC's Planning Policy Team, which informed the Parish Council's revised, final consultation response.

The Parish Council's decision was influenced by a number of important considerations, including the following:-

- That the majority of respondents to the Parish Council's recent household questionnaires expressed support for constructive engagement in the Local Plan process;
- That there is a significant demand for new housing, particularly in South East England;
- That national planning policy mandates a presumption "in favour" of sustainable development;
- That having a 'sound' and up-to-date Local Plan in place offers a defence against speculative development in rural areas and that in the absence of this, Ashford Borough is currently susceptible to such proposals;
- That the proposed allocation on Branch Road represents less than 1 per cent of Ashford Borough Council's identified housing need to 2030;
- That Chilham is a relatively sustainable location, with its own railway station, bus service, post office, shop and GP surgery; and
- That a Local Plan allocation offers the Parish Council an important opportunity to influence the form of development that comes forward and to secure wider community benefits.

The Parish Council recognises that some Parishioners – and particularly those that would be directly affected by the proposed development on Branch Road – are unhappy at the Council's "in principle" acceptance of Policy S56. Most of the arguments of those who have objected in principle are against any development in the Parish. The Parish Council is mindful of the fact that Chilham is highly sensitive to new development, in terms of its potential impacts on the Parish's nationally significant natural and built environment and on its infrastructure. Hence the important caveats to the "in principle" support that the Council has offered to Policy S56, and the Council's clear opposition to the allocation of further sites in the Parish.

Nevertheless, it is simply not tenable to object to all new development, as such an approach risks the Parish Council losing its influence in the planning process and having development imposed upon the area with no opportunity to shape its form, scale or mitigation. Some have accepted the concept of growth in the Parish in principle, but consider the site on Branch Road to be unsuitable, and have objected to Policy S56 on those grounds. Many of these issues will, in practice, turn on the specific design proposed and no design has yet been produced. The caveats listed in the Parish Council's response do address these points and, if they are included in the final policy, will provide a degree of protection against wholly unsuitable development.

The Parish Council is committed to keeping residents fully informed as the Local Plan progresses and future development proposals come forward. If residents have any questions or concerns, they are invited to contact the Parish Clerk or Chairman.



PARISH QUESTION TIME 2017 CONSULTATION REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

Following the Parish Question Time consultation exercise earlier this year, the Parish Council again undertook to use the feedback received from parishioners to inform a Consultation Report. This report should be read alongside the Council's Strategic Plan to 2019, which sets out the priority actions that the Parish Council will take over the remainder of its current term of office.

The report is structured according to the questions asked of parishioners in the household questionnaires (see feedback summary on final page). It also addresses the additional feedback received on specific matters via "free text" responses.

It should be noted, however, that issues and/or questions requiring a personal response will be responded to by email or letter on an individual basis.

2. QUESTIONNAIRE FEEDBACK

Q1) to Q3) Engagement with parishioners:

A clear majority of respondents expressed the view that the Parish Council engages effectively with residents and has produced an appropriate and achievable Strategic Plan. Whilst this is pleasing, the Council is nevertheless mindful of the fact that the overall response rate this year was very low (<10%); therefore further work is needed before firm conclusions can be drawn in this respect. Moreover, some 60% of those that did respond stated that they did not know whether or not good progress has been made against the Strategic Plan objectives. Parish Councillors intend to visit a sample of households that did not respond to the questionnaire to establish the primary reasons for this and whether a refined approach to engagement and consultation could yield an improved response rate in the future.

Q4) and Q5) Grounds maintenance and highway maintenance tasks:

The majority of respondents expressed support for the Parish Council accepting responsibility for certain Borough Council grounds maintenance tasks and County Council highways maintenance tasks in the Parish. In the short-term, the Council will continue to undertake tasks such as litter picks, basic vegetation maintenance and sign cleaning by way of its volunteer networks covering Chilham, Old Wives Lees and Shottenden. However, we have recently expressed an interest in participating in a "Parish Cluster" to deliver Borough Council grounds maintenance tasks with Crundale, Godmersham and Molash Parish Councils and will keep parishioners fully informed as this scheme develops.

Q6) Crime prevention measures:

Respondents supported the concept of the Parish Council funding crime prevention measures in the parish. We are aware that there have occasionally been incidents of anti-social behaviour in recent months, particularly on and around Old Wives Lees Village Green, and we are working alongside our Kent County Council Community Warden and Police Community Support Officer to address these. We are nevertheless prepared to take further proactive measures, such as the installation of Closed Circuit Television Cameras, should this prove necessary.

Q7) and Q8) Ashford Local Plan:

Respondents expressed overwhelming support for the Parish Council to work with other local councils to influence the emerging Ashford Local Plan to 2031. They also expressed overall support for an update to the Parish Design Statement. We will shortly be arranging an open meeting to inform our response to the Regulation 19 consultation on the Draft Local Plan, which is scheduled to take place during July and August. We will also commission specialist consultants to update the Parish Design Statement, which will better enable us to influence the content and outcome of future planning applications.



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Q9) and Q10a) Sawmills site developer contributions:

There was overall support from respondents for the use of unallocated contributions arising from the Sawmills site development to deliver adult gym equipment at Old Wives Lees Village Green and the upgrade of equipment at Latin Field. We will therefore seek confirmation from Ashford Borough Council that these projects are eligible for funding under the terms of the agreement with the developer and, subject to the outcome of these discussions, progress them accordingly.

Q10b) to Q12) Parish precept:

The largest proportions of respondents stated that they would support an increase in the annual precept to enable the Parish Council to spend up to £500 per year on a summer event, the use of social media and improvements to its website respectively. We will therefore develop firm proposals for consideration by the Council in due course, albeit it may be that we will continue to provide financial support direct to the "Chilham Chase and Chill" event at Chilham Castle if it proves successful this year, rather than organise a standalone function.

Q13) to Q18) Parish Council communication:

It is clear that parishioners use Parish Council noticeboards, the Parish News / PC Tips and the village news columns in local newspapers to access information about the Parish Council in the main. The Parish Council website and email network are less well used, although a reasonable number of people subscribe to these media. We will seek to promote this information more readily in response to this feedback and investigate the potential to use social media in addition (as confirmed above).

Q19) Community Engagement frequency:

The majority of respondents indicated that they would like the Parish Council to hold a community engagement exercise on an annual basis and we will therefore continue to do so, taking into account feedback from this year.

Q20) Attending a Parish Council meeting:

Whilst it is evident that relatively few parishioners attend Parish Council meetings in person, we are aware that many access meeting agendas, reports and minutes via our website and we will continue to promote this facility. We will also explore alternative means of making face-to-face contact with local people via local events and activities and will shortly be issuing our Parish Welcome Pack for new residents.

3. OTHER ISSUES

Many of the free text comments made by respondents to the household questionnaires have been addressed in the preceding analysis. However, the following issues warrant an additional response:-

Road safety - following the recent injury accidents on main roads in the parish, the Parish Council raised concerns with Kent County Council, who have since undertaken to complete a Crash Cluster Study of the A252 and A28 between Charing and Chartham. We will ensure that the outcomes of this study are transmitted to parishioners.

Local facilities - whilst the range of everyday retail facilities available in Chilham is relatively limited, we are very fortunate to have a well provisioned Post Office and Shop which is becoming a rarity in communities of our size. We also benefit from good public transport links to Ashford and Canterbury.

Dog fouling - we are aware of local incidents of dog fouling in Chilham and Old Wives Lees and will be taking these up with Ashford Borough Council's new enforcement contractor to address.

Litter/Potholes - we will promote Ashford Borough Council's litter reporting service and Kent County Council's pothole reporting service and seek to instigate a network of local people who will take ownership of this duty in their part of the parish, as outlined in the Strategic Plan.



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PARISH QUESTION TIME FEEDBACK SUMMARY

	agree		don't know		disagree					
The Parish Council:										
(1) effectively engages with its parishioners	40	75%	9	17%	4	8%				
(2) has produced an appropriate and achievable Strategic Plan	28	53%	22	42%	3	6%				
(3) has made good progress against its Strategic Plan objectives	17	33%	31	60%	4	8%				
As a priority for 2017/18, the Parish Council should investigate :-										
(4) accepting responsibility for borough grounds maintenance tasks in the parish	38	73%	5	10%	9	17%				
(5) accepting responsibility for county highway maintenance tasks in the parish	30	57%	1	2%	22	42%				
(6) funding crime prevention measures in the parish	29	57%	9	18%	13	25%				
(7) work with other parish councils to influence the Ashford Local Plan	43	81%	8	15%	2	4%				
(8) spend up to £7.5k updating the Parish Design Statement	19	37%	16	31%	16	31%				
The Parish Council should support the use of unallocated s106 Play Area funding for:-										
(9) Parish Council – Adult Gym equipment at OWL Green (c£5k)	19	36%	16	30%	18	34%				
(10a) Parish Council – Upgrade of equipment at Latin Field (c£5k)	22	42%	19	37%	11	21%				
Please tick one box for each of the proposals below to indicate the level of funding you would consider reasonable (£500 is equivalent to an extra 70p per year on the Band D precept charge)										
How much should the Parish Council increase its annual precept in order to spend money on:										
	None		Under £500		£500 to £1000		£1000 to £1500		Over £1500	
(10b) a summer event in the parish	9	17%	20	37%	18	33%	4	7%	3	6%
(11) using social media	17	33%	29	56%	4	8%	2	4%	0	0%
(12) improving its website	12	24%	23	45%	12	24%	3	6%	1	2%
How many times a month on average do you use the following:										
	Never		Under 1		1 to 5		5 to 10		Over 10	
(13) Parish Council noticeboards	8	15%	17	31%	24	44%	3	6%	2	4%
(14) Parish Council pages in Parish News	1	2%	6	11%	36	67%	6	11%	5	9%
(15) village news column in local press	14	27%	7	13%	24	46%	3	6%	4	8%
(16) Parish Council website	24	46%	15	29%	10	19%	2	4%	1	2%
(17) Parish Contact emails	26	51%	5	10%	8	16%	6	12%	6	12%
(18) Parish Council newsletter (PC Tips)	9	17%	14	27%	27	52%	2	4%	0	0%
Please tick one box for each of the questions below regarding your engagement with the Parish Council.										
	Never		Once		Twice		4 times		5 times or more	
(19) How often during its 4 year term should the Parish Council hold a community engagement	2	4%	3	6%	11	22%	28	55%	7	14%
(20) How often during a typical year do you attend a Parish Council meeting	38	72%	10	19%	1	2%	1	2%	3	6%

Chilham Parish Council (August 2017)

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