

## The 'Local Consultation' Process in the parish of Chilham

### Why we are having a consultation

Ashford Borough Council (ABC) has invited Parish Councils to hold events, eg in the form of a workshop or an exhibition, with the aim of assembling local views on the 'site submissions' in their area. If agreement can be reached between the local planning authority and local community on the suitability and deliverability of sites this provides a strong case for the decision-making process at examination.

These local views will inform a detailed assessment of all 'site submissions' to understand what the site constraints and opportunities are. This is an ongoing process and it is anticipated that ABC will want to consult with communities through a further round of consultation once the list of sites has been shortened to those sites with a reasonable prospect of delivering development within the plan period.

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### Background:

CPC formulated its consultation plan adopting suggestions made by ABC officers at its January meeting. This plan was developed at the February and March meetings with the leaflet agreed at the April meeting. The consultation has been advertised through its minutes, the March and April editions of Parish News, the CPC website, noticeboards.

CPC decided there should be an objective process for determining the outcomes from each stage in the process and that parishioners should be involved in open meetings as part of the consultation.

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A commitment was obtained from ABC officers regarding their involvement and this included the recommendation that, for the planned workshops to be successful, the number of participants should be limited to 35 (later increased to 36).

Leaflets have been delivered throughout the parish explaining the plan.

At the Annual Parish Meeting on 17th April, a few parishioners voiced concerns regarding the decision to include a workshop limited to 35 randomly selected members of the public. There have been no other negative comments received by the parish council.

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**Review of Considerations:**

1) All parishioners must have an equal opportunity to participate and should be encouraged to do so

*A leaflet has been distributed to all households inviting them to participate and have their say in the future development of their parish. Details of the sites involved were not listed as it was felt this could result in parishioners from areas not potentially affected ignoring the invitation.*

2) There must be a clear response from the parish council to ABC drawn objectively from the feedback collected from parishioners

*All parishioners will be invited to complete a questionnaire, distributed to all households in the parish, to express their views on all sites. These can be submitted at the Open Exhibition or at Chilham Post Office beforehand. The questionnaire will be designed so that a simple collation of these views will produce a corresponding parish-wide view on each site.*

3) A landowner of a site under consideration must not have undue influence on the consultation

*The parish council cannot legally exclude a landowner from this consultation, however it will ask landowners to declare their interest when participating in the consultation and this interest will be noted in any documentation produced as part of the consultation.*

4) Parishioners must have confidence in the process

*Only one concern has been raised of which the parish council is aware, that regarding the plan to limit workshop attendees. If there are more than 36 names put forward as attendees, the meeting will be asked to indicate by a show of hands whether this is acceptable.*

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**How will it work**

Chilham Parish Council (CPC) wants to provide all parishioners with the opportunity it can to have their say and inform ABC of their views regarding the ‘site submissions’ in the parish of Chilham.

It has therefore decided to accept an offer from ABC officers to run a workshop (in partnership with CPC) in Chilham Village Hall on 22nd May. A random selection of the community (36 names drawn from a hat this evening) will be invited to discuss general planning issues and the sites that have been promoted.

If more than 36 names go into the hat, the meeting will first be asked to indicate by a show of hands whether it considers restricting the attendees at the workshop is acceptable.

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If no restriction required or the meeting agrees the restriction is acceptable:

- 1) The workshop on the 22nd May will go ahead as planned. Other members of the community are invited to attend as observers if they wish. After the workshop an outcome statement produced by ABC supplemented with any observations (eg site constraints and opportunities) identified by attendees at the workshop that CPC consider would be useful information for parishioners, will be produced.
  
- 2) An exhibition will be held in St Marys Church on 11th June at 730pm. For 7 days prior to this exhibition, details of the ‘site submissions’ together with the output from the workshop on 22nd May will be on public display in the South Transept. Parish Councillors will be on hand at the exhibition to answer questions regarding the ‘site submissions’ and the output from the workshop. All parishioners will be invited to complete a questionnaire, distributed to all households in the parish, to express their views on all sites. These can be submitted at the Open Exhibition or Chilham Post Office or The Star in Old Wives Lees beforehand. The questionnaire will be designed so that a simple collation of these views will produce a corresponding parish-wide view on each site. These questionnaires will provide the evidence from which CPC responds to ABC on behalf of its parishioners.

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If the meeting does not agree to the restriction:

- 1) The workshop on the 22nd May will be cancelled.
- 2) An exhibition will be held in St Marys Church on 11th June from 3pm until 8pm. For 7 days prior to this exhibition, details of the 'site submissions' will be on public display in the South Transept. ABC officers and Parish Councillors will be on hand at the exhibition to answer questions regarding the 'site submissions'. All parishioners will be invited to complete a questionnaire, distributed to all households in the parish, to express their views on all sites. These can be submitted at the Open Exhibition or Chilham Post Office or The Star in Old Wives Lees beforehand. The questionnaire will be designed so that a simple collation of these views will produce a corresponding parish-wide view on each site. These questionnaires will provide the evidence from which CPC responds to ABC on behalf of its parishioners.