

Main issues raised at the community workshop for the Chilham Sawmill site held at St. Mary's Church, Chilham on the 14th April 2011.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The former Chilham Sawmill site is allocated as policy CHIL1 within the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD. The developers of the site represented by Lee Evans Planning now wish to bring forward a planning application. A community workshop was held at the village church as part of the pre-application process to enable the parish council and residents to inform the early stages of site design and layout as well as identifying the main highway and access issues.
- 1.2 Attendees were invited to the workshop by the parish council. Ashford Borough Council facilitated the workshop and a representative from Kent Highways was in attendance to ensure the highway and access issues could be properly addressed.
- 1.3 The workshop focused around a list of main issues previously identified by the parish council which included:
 - Site layout
 - Access to and from the site for pedestrians and vehicles
 - Road junctions
 - Parking – for dwellings and the station
 - Design of dwellings
 - Facilities for the site / village
- 1.4 Approximately 18 -22 people were in attendance so the workshop was structured into two groups, one group focusing on highway / access issues and then swapping with the other group half way through the workshop to focus on site layout and the potential design of dwellings. Discussions from the two groups were recorded onto flipcharts; the results are set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.5 Three further comments were submitted to the Council following the workshop - these comments have been included within the results summarised below and are set out in full in Appendix 1.

2. Main issues

- 2.1 The matters raised by both groups are summarised below.
- 2.2 Site access: it was felt by one group that access into and out of the site was best achieved from the middle of the site along the A28 as it provided the best visibility in both directions. This was the location of the access previously approved for the industrial scheme for the site and the one recommended by KCC Highways. Group 2 considered access from Mill Lane would be more appropriate as this was the furthest point from the A28 / A252 junction and was based on an existing road junction. This group felt that this junction should be signalised to allow pedestrian crossing of the A28 as well as ensuring that vehicles will be able to exit the site during peak times.
- 2.3 Road safety: Bagham junction was highlighted as having particular safety issues with attendees reporting on the many accidents at the junction. Many felt that a roundabout was one possible solution but questioned whether it may cause problems for pedestrians wanting to get to and from the village. If a roundabout was not possible it was agreed that junction improvements would be needed but they were keen to keep the central reservation to assist pedestrians crossing the road.
- 2.4 Speed limits: All respondents considered speeding traffic to be a problem for the area as a whole and felt that you took your life into your own hands when trying to cross the A28. Different speed reducing measures were suggested from flashing speed signs and anti-skid surfaces to traffic lights at a pedestrian crossing. Both groups agreed that an interactive traffic speed sign may reduce speeding but although they

preferred a 30mph sign, KCC thought that they may only realistically get permission from central Government for a 40mph sign.

- 2.5 Pedestrian / cycle movements: Both groups highlighted the current problem of crossing the A28 to access the village from the site. There was a general preference for a pedestrian / cycle crossing at the Bagham Lane end of the site. Both groups felt that traffic management needed to be looked at to reduce speeding at this entrance to the village if crossing the A28 was to be made safe. Attendees wanted a pedestrian / cycle path along the A28 site frontage, with improvements being made to the existing pedestrian crossing at A28 / A252 junction. Attendees felt it important that access to the railway station is considered, as well as access for the disabled, pushchairs and cyclists.
- 2.6 Site Layout
- Group 1: favoured a crescent design for the site, with dwellings around an informal village green style open space. They preferred a road network that went around the edge of the site but that was designed so to prevent it being used as a race track. Group 1 wanted the dwellings to face the railway line rather than the A28.
- Alternatively, group 2 favoured a sinuous design with an informal layout where the road weaved around the edge of the site, with a small number of cul-de-sacs / closes. The group preferred the dwellings being orientated towards the A28 to create a positive frontage to the entrance of the village.
- 2.7 Dwelling design: Both groups wanted to see high quality design. Group 1 preferred simple architectural design, with south facing roofs where possible to take advantage of renewable energy opportunities.
- 2.8 Open space: Both groups favoured informal open space with benches rather than formal play equipment. Group 2 wanted the space to be dynamic and have the ability to respond to the sites demographic profile once known, so that play equipment could be added at a later date if thought to be beneficial to residents.
- 2.9 Landscaping: Group 1 felt that a hedge should provide screening along the A28 frontage. Group 2 favoured informal landscaping throughout the site to break up areas of housing. Both groups felt that screening was needed for the sub-station and Pomegranate catering areas.
- 2.10 Mix of dwellings: Both groups felt that the site should have a maximum of 2 storeys, but dwellings to have a minimum of 2 bedrooms. Both groups wanted the site to be developed with a mix of dwelling sizes and types throughout to provide variety and interest. Group 1 preferred a mix of apartments and houses, where as group 2 had no preference between houses and flats but preferred the dwellings to be of a village style.
- 2.11 Residents parking: It was agreed that the location for resident parking needs to be designed carefully, as it could be unsightly to look at. Parking to the rear of the properties was favoured. Group 1 wanted a minimum of 2 spaces per property with the other group expressing a need for adequate residential and visitor parking only.
- 2.12 Station car parking: The first preference for both groups was to allocate station car parking off site, potentially on a strip of land opposite the old Alma. Group 1 identified either the north western or south eastern extremes of the site for station car parking should it not be possible to locate the parking off site.

Appendix 1 - outcomes from the Chilham Sawmill Site Community Workshop – 14th April 2011 (St. Mary's Church)

Highway and Access	Group 1	Group 2
Vehicular access onto the site	Middle of site provided best visibility in both directions.	Access at Mill Lane Roundabout with access onto the site, questioned whether this would cause problem for Mill Lane pedestrians
Road safety measures	Flashing signs (speed) and anti-skid surface.	Traffic lights with pedestrian crossing Keep refuge on A28 / A252 junction
Speed limit	Would prefer 30 mph but may need to be 40 mph (KCC)	Interactive traffic sign 40 mph
Pedestrian / cycle issues	Cycle path / access necessary General preference for pedestrian / cycle crossing at Bagham Lane end of site	Footpath along frontage of site Access on south side of railway to station
	Existing pedestrian crossing at A28 / A252 junction should remain (and be improved if possible)	Access for disabled / pushchairs / cyclists
	Look at Bagham Lane itself (traffic flow and management – conflict with pedestrians).	

Site Design and Layout	Group 1	Group 2
Site Design	Favoured a crescent design for the site, centred around a central green area. Road network around the edge of the site- although designed so that it wasn't used as a race track	Favoured a sinuous design where a road weaved around the edge of the site, with a small number of cul-de-sacs/ closes protruding from this road. Dwellings not to be in rows, but more ad hoc layout.
Orientation of buildings	Houses not looking onto the A28 Orientation of dwellings towards the railway rather than A28.	The front aspect of the housing should face the road on the A28 boundary providing an active frontage on this key route on the edge of Chilham. Rear gardens should be located against the boundary of the railway line and any flats (if these were to be part of the sites design) could be provided in this location.

Site Design and Layout	Group 1	Group 2
Boundaries	The A28 boundary should be planted and screened, specifically at the northern western edge of the site.	Any buildings near the railway boundary should be in small blocks, with gaps between, so that through views of the lakes can be seen.
Green Space	<p>One green area, centred in the middle of the site with village green feel.</p> <p>It was identified that this green space should not include play equipment, but acted as an informal area that could have benches where people could sit and meet. It was identified that the front aspect of the housing should immediately abut this green space</p>	<p>A preference for two small green spaces located around the sinuous road, generally at either end of the site. These areas would just be small green areas with a bench should someone wish to sit outside.</p> <p>No play equipment should be provided initially, as it was unsure what the demographic profile of the new residents would be. However, one of the green areas should be able to accommodate play equipment should this be found to be a requirement in the future.</p> <p>Landscaping throughout site to breakup housing space.</p>
Access	Pavement along the A28 linking the station to the development.	<p>Pavement along the A28 linking the station to the development.</p> <p>Site should have a safe access.</p>
Dwelling Types and Sizes	<p>Mix of apartment / houses but 2 bedroom dwellings were a minimum size requirement for the site.</p> <p>Dwellings should be a maximum of 2 Storey</p> <p>The dwelling sizes and types should be mixed through the site, so that the site provides a diverse variety that is interesting and imaginative</p>	<p>No preference between flats/ houses but 2 bedroom dwellings were a minimum size requirement for the site.</p> <p>Dwellings should be of a village style.</p> <p>Dwellings should be a maximum of 2 Storey</p> <p>The dwelling sizes and types should be mixed through the site, so that the site provides a diverse variety that is interesting and imaginative</p>

Site Design and Layout	Group 1	Group 2
Affordable Housing	Affordable housing was not discussed at length, but the Core Strategy requirement of 35% affordable units was accepted, as was the recommendation of the Affordable housing SPD, which states that affordable units should be 'pepper-potted' through the site.	Affordable housing was not discussed at length, but the Core Strategy requirement of 35% affordable units was accepted, as was the recommendation of the Affordable housing SPD, which states that affordable units should be 'pepper-potted' through the site. A requirement for disabled person units identified- a bungalow was suggested.
Planting / Screening	Planting / screening needs to be provided around the electricity Sub station / Pomegranate catering Hedge to be provided along A28 frontage, to improve frontage.	Planting / screening needs to be provided around the electricity Sub station / Pomegranate catering. The possibility of providing built development to screen this area was also discussed, but a decision was not resolved regarding this.
Community	It was envisaged that the community would be of a mixed demographic and could provide the possibility of dwelling units for commuters.	It was envisaged that the community would be of a mixed demographic and could provide the possibility of dwelling units for commuters.
Residents Parking	Parking to rear of properties as it was unsightly to look at. Minimum 2 spaces per property	The site should provide for residents parking only. Adequate parking for visitors required. The location of the parking spaces would need to be designed carefully, as it was identified that parking in the front of dwellings can be unsightly.
Listed buildings	Not discussed	The location and the issues surrounding the listed building were discussed, although suitable solution wasn't identified.

Site Design and Layout	Group 1	Group 2
Station Car parking:	<p>The first preference of the group was to allocate Station Car parking off site. The number of car parking spaces was not discussed.</p> <p>If station car parking could not be located off-site then as an alternative the parking spaces for the station should be located at either the north western or south eastern extremes of the site.</p> <p>Shared parking with Pomegranate was considered as they maybe able to provide ongoing maintenance.</p>	<p>This group had a strong preference that the station car parking should not be provided for on the old sawmills site and therefore no options for location were explored. Options for off-site provision only.</p> <p>The number of car parking spaces was not discussed.</p>
Other Issues Identified	<p>The site should be designed to a high standard. Simple design was preferred rather than added on architectural features.</p> <p>The buildings should be designed with south facing roofs where possible.</p> <p>Energy Centre opportunities at southern end of site.</p>	<p>A high quality design of the site is required.</p>

Additional comments received following workshop

Comment received via email from Mark Hobday

- The additional traffic from the site trying to enter and exit the A28 so close to the Bagham junction could cause significant increases to tail backs along the A28 and further increase rat run traffic into the village if the junction design is not altered.
- Consider ideal solution to be a roundabout to replace the junction, which avoids traffic lights, but question whether there is the space.
- To minimise congestion suggests the creation of a single T junction for the whole site, located at the far eastern end of the site, running parallel with the Bagham Barns Antiques boundary line. Traffic lights are not considered appropriate, just a simple STOP, T type junction.

Comment received via feedback sheet

- It was interesting to see a new vision develop. The A28 continuous high-speed traffic was seen to be lethal (likely to cause death). No understanding by the highways and planning experts was brought out of the problem of movement by pedestrians, mothers and young children and youngsters from home to village, shops and railway.
- The experts and facilitators should have greater understanding of the need for safe and easy pedestrians and bicycle movement. Particularly, mothers with young and youngsters from their home these should have priority over vehicular traffic.

Comment received via letter from Chilham Environmental Protection Society

- Our group came up with the idea of a group of houses around a green or open space untrammelled by road: a protected area, as it were, with houses south facing where possible. Suitably landscaped in keeping with it being the entrance to Chilham.
- It was thought that the railway and ABC should make proper provision for car parking (40 cars?) for the railway station, but preferably not on this site, but closer to the station entrance, if ABC and Canterbury are serious in wanting park and ride and proper use of the railway right of way. Chilham is a halfway point between Ashford and Canterbury on a very, very busy connecting road. The station needs a southern access for the disabled.
- The officials did not seem to have considered the question of access to the site by pedestrians, mothers and the very young, schoolchildren. This highlighted the site's lethal position by the A28. Whilst it was acknowledged that the speed limit could be reduced to 40mph, it was not admitted that to drive with due care and attention as required by law a lower limit, say 20mph would be in order at this dangerous junction with the A252. The expert rather indicated that there was a safe minimum speed for vehicles, and that they were entitled to drive at 50mph. The group thought that one set of traffic lights might be used to allow pedestrians to cross the A28. There seemed no way that could answer the question of vehicles turning right out of the site, given the tail-backs which ensue or would ensue in either direction.
- The officials appeared to have the view that because planning permission had been given many years ago for an industrial user there was no traffic reason for refusing a residential user.
- However, the A28 is lethal, i.e. likely to cause death and injury. That mothers and children, that youngsters need to go to the village or shops is not taken into account.
- Naturally national communication routes are vital for industry, commerce and social welfare, but the simple needs of the local community should not be deprived by what has amounted to a salami process. Even today mothers walking from the village to the shop, or railway find vehicles will not let up to permit a safe crossing. In Ashford itself it goes without question that priority is given to pedestrians in similar circumstances. In Chilham there is no pavement even along that part of the A28, but then a human sacrifice is needed.