



Parish Clerk c/o
6 Haffenden Meadow
Charing
Kent
TN27 0JR

Environment, Planning and Enforcement

Invicta House
County Hall
MAIDSTONE
Kent ME14 1XX

BY EMAIL ONLY

Phone: 03000 415673
Ask for: Francesca Potter
Email: Francesca.Potter@kent.gov.uk

20 February 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Draft Charing Neighbourhood Development Plan, 2011-2030 - Regulation 14 Consultation

Thank you for consulting Kent County Council (KCC) on the Draft Charing Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The County Council has reviewed the NDP and sets out its comments below.

Chapter 5 – Charing, Charing Heath and Westwell Leacon: The Parish

5.2 Connectivity

The County Council welcomes the description of the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network in Charing and would recommend the text is expanded to include Public Bridleways. The text should also revise the description of the North Downs Way National Trail, the Pilgrims Way and National Cycle Network Route, which are not PRoW at all points. The Parish Council should recognise within the NDP that the KCC PRoW and Access Service has a statutory duty to ensure the network is recorded, protected and maintained in partnership with the Parish Footpaths Group.

5.8.2 Quarrying and Mining Minerals in Charing

The County Council is responsible for both minerals and waste safeguarding in Kent, ensuring that mineral resources are not needlessly sterilised by other forms of development and that the continued lawful operation of permitted waste management capacity of the county is not compromised by new development.

Policy CSM 5 – “Land-won Mineral safeguarding” - within the adopted Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-30 (KMWLP) sets out Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSA), where

economically important minerals exist within Kent. The parish incorporates three safeguarded minerals of economic importance, as below. These minerals are coincident with the Ashford Mineral Safeguarding Area (MSA).

- Sub - Alluvial River Terrace Deposits (superficial deposit)
- Sandstone- Sandgate Formation (solid geology)
- Silica Sand/Construction Sand- sandstone: Folkestone Formation (solid geology)

The NDP acknowledges that past mineral operations have extensively occurred within the parish and notes the importance of the area as a supplier of sand from past and present quarrying operations of the Folkestone Formation. The County Council recommends that the NDP also mentions the safeguarded Sub - Alluvial River Terrace Deposits (superficial deposit) and Sandstone - Sandgate Formation (solid geology) which are represented in the parish.

Past and present extraction of chalk is also mentioned within the NDP. Chalk is an important economic mineral that is safeguarded, which should also be recognised within the NDP.

The Parish Council should note that the County Council and the Borough Council agreed, via a Statement of Common Ground¹, that sites in Charing that feature within the Ashford Borough's adopted Local Plan, do not have any significant mineral safeguarding policy concerns.

The parish area has no safeguarded waste management facilities that could potentially have an impact on new development and be required to be considered against the policy provisions of KWMLP Policy DM 8: Safeguarding Minerals Management, Transportation, Production and Waste Management Facilities.

The permitted future quarrying operations in the area are subject to modern restoration planning conditions and are not within 250m of housing allocation sites. Therefore, the safeguarded facilities associated with mineral extraction are not likely to be compromised by the identified housing growth in Charing.

5.9 Heritage and Character Assessment

The County Council is not aware of the 2017 AECOM Heritage and Character Assessment referred to within the NDP and requests a copy is sent to KCC Heritage Conservation (heritageconservation@kent.gov.uk).

Chapter 6 Vision and Objectives

The County Council is generally supportive of Objective 14 – “to support the full restoration of the Archbishop's Palace” and Objective 15 – “to support all initiatives which preserve heritage in the parish”. However, it should be noted that both the restoration and

¹ <https://consult.kent.gov.uk/file/5472785>.

preservation of the heritage will need to be managed more pragmatically than the objectives suggest at present.

The County Council would also like to see reference made to the PRoW network within the five community led themes. This is to reflect the extent to which the PRoW network meets the likely future public need in contributing towards more sustainable development; delivering active travel options and providing opportunities for exercise, leisure and open-air recreation for all community user groups.

Chapter 7 Neighbourhood Plan Policies

Heritage can play an important role in the contribution of the arts to person-centred, place-based health and social care, through means such as arts-on-prescription activities, cultural venues and community programmes. The historic environment provides for positive effects on our physical and mental health and wellbeing in the process. This should be recognised within the NDP.

Policy C2 New Community Centre and Improved Sports Facilities

Specific mention should be given to the improvement and enhancement of the PRoW network to enable safe and attractive walking and cycling connections and links from new developments to community facilities.

Policy C3 Infrastructure and Facilities

The County Council recommends that the Parish Council works with the County Council to ensure people are encouraged to use sustainable means of transport by ensuring local routes and facilities are accessible to the local community.

Policy C8 Education

The County Council, as Education Planning Authority, understands the objective of this policy that includes the statement “*Infrastructure and facilities required to meet the educational needs generated by new development shall be provided as the community is established*”. However, in reflection of the role of the Parish and County Council, KCC would recommend the wording is amended to: “**Contributions to support the development of infrastructure and facilities to meet the educational needs generated by new development shall be provided as the community is established should be considered and made available early in the phases of development in order to support the community as it is established**” .

Within the education section, KCC recommends that the NDP also makes reference to early years, secondary schools, and Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision currently located within the parish.

7.2 Traffic and Transport Policies

The County Council, as Local Highway Authority, has a number of concerns regarding the soundness of the transport policies in the NDP, as they are not supported by any supportive evidence and are therefore not developed in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The proposed parking policy (Policy T6) is also not in accordance with the recently adopted Ashford Borough Council Local Plan and the Ashford Residential Parking Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The County Council would strongly recommend that the Parish Council engages with KCC as Local Highway Authority regarding the proposed transport policies moving forward.

7.2.2 Traffic Congestion - Policy T1 – Traffic Congestion

The third point in T1, that states large development should be sited with direct access to the A20, is not supported by evidence to demonstrate that proposals for more than 10 dwellings which are not served from the A20 will lead to unacceptable traffic congestion. KCC, as Local Highway Authority, recommends the following amendment to the wording of the policy: *“Larger developments, in excess of 10 dwellings should be sited where they have direct access to the A20 to avoid increased traffic congestion on non ‘A’ category roads **not served from the A20 will need to demonstrate that their impact is negligible on the highway network or can be mitigated by highway improvement measures**”.*

The fourth point in Policy T1 recommends developments which create 500 plus vehicle movements a week should have direct access to the A20. This is an arbitrary figure not supported by any evidence. By way of considering the figure - 500 vehicle movements equate to 71 movements a day and based on a typical 5.5 movements per dwelling (based on Trip Rate Information Computer System (TRICS)) this equates to 13 dwellings. This policy should therefore be removed.

The fifth point in T1 proposing to substantially reduce the number of HGVs travelling through Station Road and Pluckley Road, is unlikely to ever be delivered as there are no proposals within the NDP to provide an alternative link south of the A20 that would allow HGVs to avoid Station Road and Pluckley Road.

High quality walking and cycling routes provide opportunities for active travel across the district. The NDP should ensure that development proposals incorporate convenient walking and cycling route, which provide realistic alternatives to short car journeys.

7.2.3 Traffic Management on the A20 - Policy T2 – Traffic Management on the A20

The 500 vehicle movement threshold should be removed from this policy. The proposed wording in the policy is not acceptable to KCC as Local Highway Authority, as the County Council does not take incremental contributions towards highway improvements and would instead expect that such schemes are fully delivered by the developer. KCC, as Local Highway Authority, recommends the following redrafted wording of the policy: *“**Proposed significant developments located within the vicinity of the A20 that will increase***

pedestrian movements across the A20 should deliver pedestrian crossing improvements where possible.”

Traffic Management Station Road / Pluckley Road – Policy T3 – Traffic Management Station Road / Pluckley Road

This policy contradicts policy T1 and is also not considered to be in accordance with the NPPF as it implies that a proposal for more than six houses off Pluckley Road or Charing Heath Road would be unacceptable. This is not supported by any evidence as to the unsuitability of Pluckley Road or Charing Heath Road.

Policy T5 Pedestrian Footways

Development provides opportunities to create new links and enhance existing routes which would encourage active travel and support a modal shift in travel for short distance journeys. Policy T5 should therefore include a reference to the PRow network, and its protection and enhancement as a vital component of the transport network, providing valuable opportunities for active travel.

7.2.7 Residential Car Parking Spaces – Policy T6 – Residential Car Parking Space

Visitor parking spaces should be provided at a rate of one space per five dwellings, as set out in the Ashford Residential Parking SPD.

Tandem parking is acceptable with the caveat there should be a 0.5 space per dwelling uplift in visitor parking, as set out in the Ashford Residential Parking SPD.

7.2.8 Charing Village Parking – Policy T7 Charing Village Parking

The County Council does not consider this policy to be acceptable. It is not reasonable to expect development sites within the village of Charing to contribute to a new car park for the village, given that most residents of new development sites are likely to walk to facilities in the village. If future residents are going to use the facilities on the High Street by private car, then they are likely to continue to park on the High Street to the north of the A20 and are extremely unlikely to use the Parsons Mead Car Park.

Chapter 8 Employment Creation and New Business Development

Policy EC1 Locations Allocated for New Business Units (commercial and industrial)

KCC recommends specific mention of the PRow network within this policy - replacing private vehicle journeys with active travel should be promoted through the NDP.

8.4 New Community Centre with Integrated Business Units

The County Council would like to see specific reference made to improving and enhancing the PRoW network to enable safe and attractive walking and cycling connections and links to new community facilities. Developer contributions could be used to upgrade existing routes or create new path links that address existing network fragmentation issues highlighted by the public.

Chapter 9 Countryside and Environment

9.4 Non-designated assets

The County Council would request that the three milestones in the parish which remain are added to the list of non-designated sites. The milestones are particularly vulnerable to damage and it would be helpful if the Parish Council monitors their condition and informs KCC of any damage. There are also three Second World War crash sites in the parish that are vulnerable to treasure hunters or illegal excavation. Again, it would be helpful if the Parish Council could monitor the sites and inform KCC or the police if any damage occurs.

The list of assets considered 'worthy of conservation' excludes a number of archaeological sites, including sites such as the medieval Eversley manor (Monkary Farm), ridge and furrow near Wickens and a number of Second World War pillboxes. All surviving heritage sites have a degree of heritage significance that needs to be identified and considered in advance of any works which could lead to damage. This should be through the use of Heritage Statements, but could also include desk-based assessments and, where appropriate, archaeological fieldwork.

9.5 Public Green Space

The provision of high quality open green spaces and opportunities for outdoor recreation should be a priority. The NDP should aim to increase the provision of accessible green spaces and improve opportunities to access this resource. There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating that physical exercise in open green space can have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. Good public transport and active travel links with open spaces should be made available so that the public are not dependent on private vehicle use for visiting these sites.

Landscape Strategy

Considering the value and importance of the PRoW network, it is requested that this policy text includes reference to the KCC Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)² and the Kent Design Guide. These documents apply to urban and rural locations and intended to complement and where appropriate, draw together relevant technical and design information, both national and local, that has already been published.

² https://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/90491/Rights-of-Way-Improvement-Plan-2018-2028.pdf

Policy E1 Historic Environment

The County Council welcomes the inclusion of this policy within the NDP and the recognition that the historic environment can be enhanced as well as conserved.

The historic environment has rightly been identified as crucial to a community's 'sense of place' as it reminds people how their community came to be and how it took on the shape it has. It can also bring important health and wellbeing benefits. This is particularly important for new developments, whether in the form of new settlements or growth on the urban fringe. If such settlements are to feel part of the continuing story of the parish and form sustainable new communities, then the historic aspects of such places must be recognised and conserved.

The major historic environment issues that need to be taken into consideration include:

- *Design and layout of new developments:* New layouts should complement existing historic settlement patterns, should be undertaken sensitively and existing patterns should be retained as much as possible. Developments should respect existing settlement in terms of scale, layout and orientation so that the pre-existing historic settlement is not diminished by the new development.
- *Building materials:* The County Council would like to see the design of developments complementing any existing local historic character that the area may have. Materials used in the design, where possible, should be appropriate to the existing character, if possible, using locally sourced and traditional materials.
- *Protection and conservation of historic remains:* whether built or buried.
- *Incorporation of the historic environment assets into leisure and cultural improvements:* particularly relevant for the parish's greenspaces, parks and gardens.
- *Working with the historic landscape:* new developments may be more successfully integrated with the parish if they work with the existing historic landscape.

Policy E2 Listed Buildings and non-designated heritage assets

The County Council is supportive of this policy although recommends that the wording is clarified to ensure the objective is clear.

Policy E3 The Archbishop's Palace

The County Council is supportive of this policy although would suggest that proposals for restoration need to be sympathetic to the full history of the site and should not artificially restore the site to a particular time or period. Historic England should be consulted on any proposals at an early stage.

Policy E7 Landscape Strategy

Charing sits within a landscape that is both historic and vulnerable. To understand and value landscape character fully, it is important to consider its historic aspect. This means the pattern of tracks, lanes, field boundaries and other features that comprise the historic character of the modern landscape and which can shape future growth. The Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation (2001) has identified the broad historic character of the landscape of Kent but it is strategic in scope. To be most useful at a local level it needs more detailed refinement as has already taken place in Medway, Tunbridge Wells and other places. This would make an interesting community project and KCC would be happy to discuss such a refinement project with Charing Parish Council.

Policy E8 Ecological Impacts

New buildings, including mobile and park homes, need to adequately address the potential for ecological impacts and provide appropriate mitigation to protect designated species on all sites allocated for development in the parish.

All development will need to adequately address the potential for ecological impacts and provide appropriate mitigation accordingly. KCC therefore recommends that the policy should be encouraging developments to implement the mitigation hierarchy, emphasising that development should be resisted when it cannot demonstrate that there will not be a damaging impact on protected species or habitats.

The County Council also recommends a policy which requires Biodiversity Net Gain. It is likely that Net Gain will be mandated within the Environment Bill and there will be a need for developments to demonstrate that they are meeting at least 10% net gain. This could link into the enhancement/improvement of open/green spaces set out in Policy E4 – Designation of Green Spaces in the Parish / E5 – Green Space Development.

Policy E9 Views

In areas where there would be significant effect on PRow from new development, the network must also be included in the landscape planning of development as a whole. The policy should therefore make reference to PRow. There should be inclusion of how the Parish Council works in partnership with KCC to record, maintain and develop the network.

Chapter 10 Housing

10.4 Estimated Number of New Houses to be Constructed in the Plan Period

The County Council recommends the NDP should make specific reference to the PRow network and the opportunities offered to health and wellbeing, tourism, sustainable transport and access to the environment.

10.5 Site Assessments

The County Council recommends that “Access to services” also includes the proximity to sustainable, active travel links and connectivity to the PRow network.

10.5.3 Summary of site assessment outcomes

The County Council has previously provided commentary on the land adjacent to Poppyfields development site as part of the Ashford Borough Council site allocations consultation process. The following comments apply to:

- Land to rear of Northdowns Garage (Policy S28, now part of S55 in the Ashford Local Plan)
- Wheler North land (part of Policy S55 in the Ashford Local Plan)
- Bromley Land west of Wheler North site (part of Policy S55 in the Ashford Local Plan)

The site contains several recorded metal finds, suggesting some level of Roman and later activity. Although the site is south west of the focus of the medieval settlement of Charing, there may be evidence of the use of several ancient trackways converging on Charing. A phased programme of archaeological mitigation will be required. Significant archaeology could be dealt with through suitable conditions on a planning approval.

Allocations in Charing Village Policy H1 – Allocation of housing sites in Charing Village

The County Council recommends that the description and policy should acknowledge the existence of recorded Public Footpath AW349 that passes directly through the site. It is requested that existing PRow and promoted routes which pass directly through a site or surround a site boundary, are referred to in the description and policy for each site.

Guidance notes for these site allocations should include the following:

- 1. Sites should protect or enhance the quality of any PRow contained within, or linking to, the site, to ensure recreational opportunities and access to the wider countryside are provided for. This includes access for walking, cycling, horse riding and the availability of open space.**
- 2. The character and value of quiet lanes connected to the site should be considered and protected where possible.**
- 3. The sites should positively add sustainable transport choices. Consideration should be given to the creation of new paths and upgrading of existing routes, to cater for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians, especially where there are opportunities to connect with the surrounding PRow network or address safety concerns. It is therefore requested that the KCC PRow and Access Service is directly involved in future discussions regarding projects that will affect the PRow network both directly and with a wider countryside impact.**

Allocations in Charing Heath - Policy H2 – Allocation of Housing Sites in Charing Heath

It has not been demonstrated that the land north-west of Swan Street site can provide suitable and safe access, as the red line boundary does not extend right up to the public highway. This site is not sustainable as it is poorly related to basic services and there is no safe pedestrian access to either the Public House or the bus stops on Charing Heath Road (for which there is only one a day service). The allocation of this site would therefore not accord with the National Planning Policy Framework in terms of sustainable development.

The land next to the Crofters site may be able to achieve a suitable access, but the County Council is concerned with the sustainability of this site, as it is poorly related to basic services and again, there is no pedestrian access to the Public House or to bus stops on Church Hill (for which there is only one a day service).

For the Land at Church Hill, KCC recognises that this site can achieve suitable visibility splays. KCC is, however, concerned with the sustainability of this site, as it is poorly related to basic services and again, there is no pedestrian access to the Public House or to bus stops on Church Hill (for which there is only one a day service).

At the Land next to Crofters, Public Footpath AW14 crosses the site and Public Footpath AW323 crosses the Land at Church Hill. It is therefore imperative, that the comments made for Policy H1 - Allocation of housing sites in Charing Village – are applied to other sites proposed allocations.

Policy H11 Infill Development in Charing Village / Policy H12 New Development, including Extensions, Outside Village Confines

KCC requests that the PRoW network is referenced to ensure that the network is considered at an early stage of the design process and successfully incorporated into future developments.

Chapter 11 Design Policies

The County Council recommends that reference is made to the Kent Design Guide, which is due to be refreshed in 2020.

Chapter 12: Creating Strong, Vibrant and Healthy Sustainable Parish

An increased population will undoubtedly add to the pressure and importance of the surrounding PRoW network. Therefore, the NDP should include a package of measures to improve the PRoW Network across Charing to encourage active travel and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, which in turn help address issues associate with air quality, health and wellbeing.

12.1 Tourism

Tourism is an important industry for Kent and the landscape is a key attractor; sustainable tourism is a way of supporting rural areas, providing jobs and supporting community services. The PRoW network has a critical role in this and therefore, the NDP should support improvements to walking and cycling routes to achieve the County Council's tourism objectives.

12.2.3 Flagship Programme Components

Reference should be made to Public Footpath AW349 in the Flagship Programme. The route of the path should feature in Figure 16 and within the site description text. The opportunity to connect the new facility and the wide range of user groups proposed should be encouraged.

It is requested that the KCC PRoW and Access Service is directly involved in future discussions regarding this project, to advise on the design and delivery and to ensure that any new routes successfully integrate with the existing PRoW network. The County Council would like to engage further with the Parish Council to consider local aspirations for access improvements at this site and potential funding sources for the delivery of these schemes.

The PRoW network is a vital component of the parish assets, providing significant opportunities for active travel and should therefore be specifically referenced to enable the delivery of network improvements across the parish which can provide sustainable transport choices and support growth in the region.

Appendix A Abbreviations

The County Council recommends the following is added as an abbreviation:

PRoW: A way over which the public have a right to pass and repass, including Public Footpaths, Pubic Bridleways, Restricted Byways and Byways Open to all Traffic.

Appendix E Recommendations

The County Council advises that the recommendations within Appendix E that relate to traffic and transport should be included within the Parish Highways Infrastructure Plan for consideration by the Schemes, Planning and Delivery Team at the County Council as Local Highway Authority.

Additional Comments

Waste Management

The County Council, as Waste Disposal Authority, is pleased to see mention of waste policy and the promotion of sustainable waste management solutions within the Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report and Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The County Council would welcome recognition within the NDP of the need for development contributions towards new waste infrastructure in the wider area from new developments within Charing. KCC acknowledges that there are currently no waste management facilities within Charing. This type of facility is strategic in nature, serving a wide area, typically at district level. The combined Ashford Waste Transfer Station and Household Waste Recycling Centre serving the residents of Charing, is at operational capacity and hence any increase in waste tonnages as a result of future development would require mitigation.

Air Quality

The County Council recognises that the Parish Council has raised air pollution as a concern within the NDP. The County Council recommends that further detail is provided in respect of this issue within the NDP and recommends engagement between the Parish Council and KCC on this matter.

Broadband Connectivity

KCC welcomes the NPD inclusion of the promotion of full fibre (fibre-to-the-premise) connections, in both new and existing development, in line with current Government policy. It is recommended that full fibre connections are also delivered within town and village centres. Ashford Borough Council has developed a full fibre policy, (EMP6) which is widely promoted nationally as best practice, whilst being in line with the current National Planning Policy Framework and the Parish Council is recommended to have consideration of this policy.

Natural Capital

The provision of a good, connected network of green infrastructure can provide multiple benefits for health and wellbeing, climate change mitigation and adaptation, air quality and biodiversity, as well as supporting walking and cycling between community facilities. The NDP Plan presents an opportunity to connect to and expand existing wildlife corridors through tree and hedgerow establishment, expansion on roadside nature reserves or through the creation of new habitat areas such as community woodland.

The County Council will continue to work with the Parish Council on the formulation and delivery of the NDP and welcomes further engagement as the Plan progresses.

If you require any further information or clarification on any matter in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Stephanie Holt-Castle
Interim Director – Environment, Planning and Enforcement