Challock Parish Council ABC Defining Village Confines Exercise & Revised Village Confines Map Public Consultation Meeting Minutes

Memorial Hall

Wednesday 28th November 2018, 7.30pm

Members of public present: approximately 58

Present

Michael Fisher (Chairman), Dianne Sandy (Clerk), Annabel Burden (Vice Chairman), John Ramsden, Max Thomas, Trevor Smith & Anthony Aitken.

Apologies

Emma Fox

Declarations of Interest

None

Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Background - Village Confines Report

Chairman Mick Fisher read out the following report:

The following report to be read out:-

Village confines are used to identify the area within which small scale development and infill may be acceptable in principle, although planning permission will obviously depend on detailed designs being appropriate.

As part of its response to the localism agenda and as a part of involving local communities in the review of the Core Strategy, the Borough Council invited the people and Parish Council of Challock to see if it is possible to redefine the built confines of the settlement as a line on a map.

Any line produced by the village would have to be fully justified in landscape and spatial terms and the process and outcomes would have to have the clear support of the local community if the Borough Council were going to be able to use the new boundary line as a material consideration in reaching planning decisions on new housing development.

**The Process**

Local people were invited to attend a workshop to explore the village confines and to share ideas on how they should be defined on a plan. The workshop aimed to build a consensus, if possible to create one.

A letter explaining the pilot scheme and asking for volunteers was distributed with the parish magazine, which is delivered to every household in Challock.

The letter was also displayed on the four village notice boards, on the village website and also advertised in the Community News section of the Kentish Express

The workshop group was drawn from across the community and came from various parts of the village; the group also included some Parish Councilors’.

**Outcomes**

The group welcomed the opportunity to have a say in defining the village confines boundary.

Local people extensively explored the village confines and shared ideas on how they should be defined on a plan.

The group met on nine occasions with two of these meetings being with planning officers from the Borough Council and Ward Councillor, David Robey.

Parish Councillors' had been kept fully informed as the Pilot Scheme progressed and had been discussed at every Parish Council meeting since the exercise commenced in October 2012.

The conclusion of this process was a locally generated interpretation of the village confines with accompanying notes giving robust and defendable conclusions.

There were two open events in the village hall where villagers could view and discuss the proposed confines with group members. The open workshops were again widely advertised and were very well attended. Booklets of the map and notes including a comment card were available for villagers to take away.

When the consultation period ended the workgroup met again to review the comments received.

The proposed confines received the clear endorsement of the Parish Council before it was formally submitted to the Borough Council.

**ABC Cabinet**

On the 14th March 2014 the ABC Cabinet approved the Built Envelope Report on

Challock, which means that it will become a material consideration in judging

Planning applications for houses in the village. With a requirement to come forward with well designed, good quality proposals that meet all other relevant ABC Policies, such as Parking and Space standards etc., and which fits in with the 'look' of the neighbourhood.

**To Date**

There have been 50 planning applications consisting of approximately 72 new

dwellings. The building of 44 dwellings which are now built or nearly

completed with a further 43 dwellings either being constructed or to be built.

The majority of approved new dwellings consist of 4/5 bedroom detached dwellings.

Less than 8 dwellings are 3 bedroom & 2 bungalows.

**Feedback Session**

On 29th September 2015 a feedback session took place with an excellent turnout of

60 parishioners. Overall the feedback was very positive; the main concerns were

not enough planning applications for 3 bedroom houses/bungalows.

One of the objectives was to provide housing for families who have a connection to

the village. Over 50% of new dwellings are for relatives/children of residents from the

village.

The parishioners did not wish to see large scale housing developments in the village.

One drawback on this type of development is the S106 Developer Contributions do

not apply and therefore no investment into the village to provide improved amenities

I.e. outdoor play space. This is out of our control and the decision was made by

central government.

In conclusion to the feedback session the village confines project has been deemed a success.

**Omission Sites 2016**

During 2016 correspondence received from ABC regarding Omission Sites to be considered for inclusion in the Local Plan 2030. During the consultation period of the Local Plan 2030 ABC received a number of representations (81) relating to sites that were not allocated within the draft plan. The representations stated that the Local Plan 2030 had omitted to include their sites and should be considered for inclusion as allocations in the final version of the Plan. These were not proposals for site allocations by ABC.

Most of these Omission sites had been received previously through the call for sites in 2013/2014 and were rejected through the SHELAA (Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment) or the SA (Sustainability Appraisal) processes which were published as background documents to the draft Local Plan.

However, 28 of the total Omission Sites were completely ‘new’ submissions or are larger areas than were previously submitted which we have never assessed. ABC undertook/reassessed the site assessment work, in accordance with the processes carried out previously for the SHELAA and SA. The Omission Sites in Challock were Pony Park, Squids Gate Farm and Clock House Land.

Challock Parish Council conducted a public consultation meeting on the 18th October 2016.

The following response was endorsed:-

The confines pilot scheme, proposed by Ashford Borough Council, allowed local people to play a key role in shaping the outcome.

The confines pilot feeds into Ashford Borough Council’s Local Plan for the borough.

The Local Plan sets out the land that needs to be provided in the borough to accommodate new homes and jobs up to 2030. This is a 15 year period.

It also includes the policies that will be used to help decide planning applications.

The village confines are used to identify the area within which small scale development and infill may be acceptable in principle within Challock, although planning permission will obviously depend on detailed designs being appropriate.

Local people extensively explored the village confines and shared ideas on how they should be defined on a plan.

The conclusion of this process was a locally generated interpretation of the village confines. The Borough Council can use the new boundary line as a material consideration in reaching planning decisions on new housing development and the Parish Council should obviously support this approach.

The confines pilot has fully delivered what it set out to do.

• The confines pilot came up with a clear vision for the slow long term growth of the village to maintain its unique character while allowing small scale growth that will help maintain its vital amenities.

• The agreed village confines is fair and caters for small scale development without any major impact on the village both aesthetically and environmentally but still allows the village to expand organically over the foreseeable future.

• Development has come forward on smaller infill sites as opposed to one or two larger sites.

• There is no identified need for large-scale housing development sites in the village, as the smaller sites within the village confines will easily deliver more appropriate scaled development.

The main purpose of the confines report was to clearly identify where development would be acceptable and avoid any uncertainty and ambiguity.

It gives the Parish Council absolutely clear guidance of where development may be appropriate until 2030.

Challock has more than contributed to the Local Plan objectives and any development proposals coming forward that are outside of the village confines should be refused on this basis. The confines map gives the Parish Council and the Borough Council clear direction. There was considerable backing for the confines from ABC and they should also stand firmly behind the report as what would be the incentive for other Parishes to go through the process if it is not material consideration in reaching planning decisions.

The confines report was a comprehensive study that took over two years to complete and it would be going completely against the community’s wishes to consider sites outside of its boundary.

ABC indicated that due to a shortfall in the number of houses required to meet the Local Plan 2030 they intended to allow for Clock House Land to be included. In February 2018 planning application Clock House Phrase 2 – change of use from agricultural to residential for 15 dwellings was submitted. 3 of the dwellings to be affordable housing 1 x 3 bedrooms for disabled family and 2 x 2 bedroom. Currently the application is awaiting decision.

**ABC Defining Village Confines Exercise and Revised Village Confines Map**

In October 2018 the parish council received a letter from Simon Cole Head of Planning Policy notifying that the ABC will shortly be commencing an exercise to identify the ‘village confines’ across the borough.

Traditionally, the village ‘confines’ for planning purposes has been defined by the following written definition in successive versions of the Local Plan:-

*“the limits of continuous and contiguous development forming the existing built-up area of the settlement, excluding any curtilage beyond the built footprint of the buildings on the site (e.g. garden areas)”*

The purpose of this exercise is to provide some additional clarity as to where the existing built confines of the village are, by expressing this on a map base.

Initially, this will be undertaken by officers at ABC Planning and a draft village confines boundary will be sent for Challock PC to review and comment. Ideally, this should also include an opportunity for local residents to be involved through an informal consultation exercise undertaken by the Parish Council so that as wide a range of views as possible can be taken into account.

Any representations made during the consultation process and the overall conclusion of the Parish Council would then be fed back to officers here and reported to Members. On satisfactory completion of the exercise, the defined ‘village confines’ will be treated as informal guidance for the purposes of determining planning applications where the relationship of a development to the ‘confines’ is relevant.

It is worth stating at this point that this exercise is only concerned with clarifying where the existing village confines extend to and any map-based definition will need to generally accord with the written definition above. If the Parish Council wishes to take an alternative approach to defining the village confines, then this should be undertaken through a Neighbourhood Plan.

ABC is aware that Challock have already undergone a confines exercise previously. Given this, it is their intention, as a starting point; to draw a revised boundary to reflect what has been built since the confines was first introduced. However, if Challock PC would like to complete an exercise, as a review of what we have done previously, there may be scope to dovetail the processes if this is deemed beneficial as well.

Councillor’s Michael Fisher and Annabel Burden along with the Clerk attended a meeting with Daniel Carter ABC Principal Planner to discuss the proposed revised village confines exercise.

At the meeting the Parish Council expressed the view that we favoured leaving the confines as drafted through the 2014 exercise.

However, Daniel advised that a revision to the 2014 confines might be required given the changes to the planning system since 2014 and the fact that the confines are now almost 5 years old and advised that the Parish Council would likely receive a revised version of the 2014 confines and that this would be less extensive than the current confines, given the need to be consistent with the definition in the Local Plan 2030.

A revised draft village envelope map for Challock has now been received and is indeed less extensive.

The Parish Council to consider the draft village envelope map and feedback any comments or amendment to ABC, including the reasons for any amendments. To recollect, the exercise is only concerned with clarifying where the existing village envelope extends to and should generally accord with the written definition in the Local Plan.

To coincide with the public consultation meeting for the defining village confines exercise, the Parish Council wishes to carry out a review of the village confines.

The Clerk asked via email to Daniel Carter as the village confines is considered an informal guideline when determining planning applications does this now mean planning applications would be considered outside of the village confines as well as within. Daniel’s reply was “as a more general point, it does not mean that every area of land within the confines is definitely developable. That has never been the case. There are a number of criteria in the policy which relates to aspects such as relationship with built form, character of the area, residential amenity which would all need to be considered as part of any application to weigh up the pros and cons. Similar there is policies governing the loss of open space as well.

Village like Challock, the confines has a slightly different context now in any event. Emerging Policy HOU5 stipulates that residential development within, adjoining or close to the existing built up confines will be acceptable in principle, providing certain criteria are met.

Under the main modifications to the Local Plan 2030 the settlement matrix states for Challock it is suited for HOU3a/HOU5 inclusion – Range of services in large village. Mixed settlements pattern with opportunity for infill and limited edge of settlement growth due to AONB location but due to settlement size this would sustainable.

Referring to last feedback session in September 2015 and it was concluded that overall the village confines project was deemed a success. Since then a number of dwellings have now been constructed how parishioners feel about the village confines project.

Parish Council to receive questions regarding ABC village confines exercise and revised village confines map.

**Open Forum**

Discussion took place regarding the Neighbourhood Plan and cost implications. Councillor Burden commented the neighbourhood plan gives parishioners more of a say in the development and growth of the village and can have an input in the type of housing required i.e. affordable housing. The cost of a Neighbourhood Plan is quite expensive and can be in the region of £30,000.

A parishioner requested for the parish council to make enquiries in the Neighbourhood Plan process and costs.

Discussion took place with HOU3 & HOU5 explanation adjoining/abutting and within the village confines (settlement).

During the discussion the following comments were made:

“Change of use – not sustainable. Developers change of use to planning applications i.e from 3 bedroom chalet bungalow to 4/5 bedroom.”

Councillor Fisher asked parishioners if they are happy with the existing confines or to support ABC revised version keep it tight. A show of hands for keeping the existing confines as it is.

24 parishioners raised their hands out of 58.

Parishioner requested further clarification on the redefining village confines as he felt many of the parishioners in attendance was not sure of the understanding.

“The new devised village confines by ABC appear a more logical line – garden areas suggest planning logic, justification logical – demarcation of land and are in line with other parish councils. Planning policy to develop in gardens. There would be more control with neighbourhood plan.”

Discussion took place regarding original village confines marking open space areas No 15 the Lees and No 17 area by Halfway. The revised map omitted these areas and in particular No 17 area near to the Halfway Restaurant, privately owned land and therefore could be considered for development. Councillor Fisher commented the Clerk has made enquiries to Daniel Carter and is waiting for a response. Councillor Burden commented that the Lees (No15) is owned by the Parish Council and would never be built on.

Councillor Fisher commented “the village confines were a long process and a lot of time and effort. At the time the parish council was informed this would be it for 15 years 2030. Now further changes in planning policy scaling it down.”

Councillor Fisher commented the Leader of the Council said at the time that this would be set as part of the 2030 Local Plan.

Councillor Burden asked for comments on whether the confines are deemed a success.

“Slow growth, smaller houses, affordable housing, but in reality larger properties, mainly 4/5 bedrooms. ABC permitted for larger houses. Neighbourhood plan would be able to determine smaller houses/affordable homes.”

“Neighbourhood plan reflect the majority of needs.”

Councillor Burden commented adjoining/abutting – continuous, contiguous growth rather than ribbon settlement affect.

Parishioner commented the 2 satellite areas of the village under the new confines how this would affect future planning applications – i.e. change of roof materials, bird box in the garden; caveat consideration.

“We pay a premium for housing in the village. Many young people cannot afford the housing. Opportinuty for garden areas for parishioners wishing to build houses in their gardens for their children who otherwise wouldn’t be able to afford to live in the village.”

Councillor Fisher requested a show of hands in favour for keeping the village confines as it is. 33 in favour of keeping the confines as it is.

“Emphasis on housing for young people - ABC commit to smaller houses. The village needs young people.”

“Clockhouse development 1 x 3 bedroom property for disabled family and 2 x 2 bedroom properties affordable.”

Councillor Smith commented with any type of planning policy there are winners and losers but would parishioners prefer a more democratic village confines or one imposed by ABC.

“Those who don’t have an interest point of view that this type of housing in the village does nothing for the infrastructure. No funding to improve services in the village.”

Councillor Fisher commented that it is important to have your say.

Comments to be sent to the Clerk by the end of December.

Comments are due back to ABC 14th January 2019. Clerk to collate feedback and present to ABC. To be endorsed at the 10th January 2019 Parish Council Meeting.

**Chairman thanked everyone for attending.**

**Meeting closed at 8.55pm**