

Chilmington Green

Building a Community at Chilmington - An Early Community Development Strategy

January 2018 – December 2022

Foreword

It is anticipated that the audience for this Foreword is residents, stakeholders and partners (including delivery partners) and funders.

There has always been an aspiration to build a strong, resilient and sustainable community at Chilmington Green and that the work to support this needed to begin at the earliest point. A common understanding that the new community should be integrated with the existing community, brought forward ambitions to start community development even before the first residents arrived. Therefore in 2017, the early community development strategy was written and adopted by Ashford Borough Council (ABC) with the aspiration to pass on the delivery of the strategy to the Chilmington Management Organisation (CMO) when incorporated and that early delivery would be undertaken utilising s106 funding provided by the developers.

Adopted by Ashford Borough Council in late 2017, there was strong agreement amongst key partners and stakeholders that early community development which supported the interim period when there was construction, but no residents on site, to the early pioneers taking up residence (up to about 100 homes), required a focus on specific priorities, distinct from when a greater number of residents were living at Chilmington Green.

Community action began with a project involving Janetka Platun, an artist in residence, who worked with the Chilmington Green Primary School and a number of local residents. The 'Welcome to Here' project saw the creation of a welcome gift for local people which had strong links to the heritage of the site. The early project fitted with the strategy's ambition to build community through working alongside existing communities and make best use of existing facilities and activities. It is proposed the project will progress in 2021/22 with further creative engagement.

In December 2019, the CMO Board agreed that they would oversee the community development strategy, working with the council to coordinate action. However, the number of residents moving in has not been as swift as was expected. The principles and actions within the strategy still stand. Community development activity has therefore slowed to keep pace with resident numbers and to ultimately safeguard the s106 funding provided for this purpose. It was agreed by the partners that the term of the strategy should be extended to reflect the slower pace of housing delivery to December 2022.

In 2019, Chilmington Green together with Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green became South of Ashford Garden Community (SAGC) and received garden community designation from central government. Garden community status recognises the commitment of local authorities and their partners to building communities for the long term, where placemaking



and quality are important aspects of design and delivery. The significance of this status is important to community building and emphasises the importance of early community development at Chilmington Green and the wider garden community in providing a sustainable and vibrant community for the long term. The CMO (and its partners) with its key role in delivering community development are central to success.

With the impact of Covid-19, 2020 was an incredibly difficult year and community action had to pause. The Chilmington Community Cabin (first premises) has been delayed in handover and interaction with new residents has been limited due to social distancing requirements. The CMO has built and maintained contact with residents through director-residents surgeries, newsletters, door knocking and the CMO website. Action in 2021/22 will need to be flexible to utilise virtual or other tools to manage any social distancing requirements but will look at delivering opportunities in a timely and beneficial way such as opening the Community Cabin to provide a space for residents to use for local meetings or family events.

The economic impact of the pandemic means the CMO will need to consider further support to enhance residents' wellbeing. A new community development action plan for 2021/22 details how the CMO and partners can work with the community, identify their needs and deliver projects that bring people and partners together to shape their community. The SAGC Community Stakeholder Group (alongside the CMO) will help input, lead and deliver projects such as creating new local community groups, through start-up funding, as well as promoting those that exist in the wider community and supporting volunteer action. The action plan includes the need to ensure residents have the opportunity to comment on new community infrastructure coming forward, such as the first play space, due to be open at the occupation of the 250th dwelling.

The CMO is determined to make Chilmington Green a wonderful place to live, work and play and is clear that 2021 is the first year in which we will make real strides towards building a strong, resilient and healthy community in which local people have a voice and can play an active part.

To compliment this, the CMO will be looking to recruit the first resident director trustee in the spring, ensuring local residents are involved in the governance and decision making of their stewardship body.

Whether you be a resident, strategic partner/stakeholder or prospective purchaser, we welcome you to Chilmington Green and look forward to meeting you soon.

Alison Breese

Lead Board Member for Community Development
Chilmington Management Organisation

SallyAnne Logan

Chief Executive
Chilmington Management Organisation

5th March, 2021