


# THE CHILMINGTON GREEN 'QUALITY CHARTER':

30+ commitments to help make a great place





**This 'Quality Agreement' has been entered into by the developers at Chilmington Green and Ashford Borough Council. It is not a formal legal agreement but is a statement of intent and a set of practical steps that both parties are committed to. The intention is that these will apply not just to the current developers but also to future house-builders working at Chilmington Green.**

It will guide progress towards our shared goal of creating a vibrant community and a very special place. The agreement will be reviewed regularly. Any additional development costs arising may need to be reflected in discussions about the overall contributions package so that the project remains viable.

This Quality Charter is divided into several key themes, with a set of specific actions for each theme:

- Making a successful community...
- Great homes that meet changing needs...
- Designing a great place...
- Delivering a great place...

## ***Making a successful community...***

### **1. Commitment to 'grow' a strong, self-managed community**

The developers will provide sufficient funding for staff and accommodation/running costs to allow for a community development programme. This will start when new residents arrive and expand as the community grows, until such activity can be funded from other sources. This will include a community website to help communication and will allow any issues or problems to be reported easily.

### **2. A community able to manage and run local facilities in the way local people want**

There will be a carefully designed, bespoke approach to community-led management at Chilmington Green produced with the close involvement of key stakeholders such as the Parish Councils. The operating principles of this model will be based on a business plan that is fully funded and robust. This will include an agreement to an endowment, the transfer of assets and a residents' levy (or 'rent charge') that will provide an income for the management model set up.

### **3. Community, health and school facilities provided when people need them**

The legal agreement supporting the planning permission will reflect the phased delivery of all the key infrastructure needed - as set out in the Area Action Plan. Delivery will be monitored by the Council to make sure facilities are delivered on time and that the developers will work with the community management organisation to produce and distribute an annual report. This will explain progress made and future proposals to residents.

### **4. Local authority leadership and determination**

The Council will continue to work with local people to make Chilmington Green a great place - for example, by having a senior councillor with a specific brief to champion Chilmington issues; working with the existing and new community and helping to develop their capacity to help shape future plans; working to deliver the community-led management model; tracking down 'best practice' to learn from and arranging visits and training opportunities; and bringing in experts from elsewhere to be 'critical friends'.

### **5. Long term community involvement in design decisions**

As the designs for Chilmington Green progress, representatives of the local community will play an important role in helping to shape the overall design code and detailed designs emerging for each phase of the project. The developers will play an active part - making their designers available for meetings when appropriate and helping to fund workshops and share best practice.

## 6. A place with a heart – a centre of activity and a focus for the community

The town square will bring together shopping and eating/drinking places; places to work and get together along with community, health and school facilities. The square will be laid out to an especially high specification – there will be a flexible space for markets, parking, events, a café, meeting people and relaxing.

Public buildings will be expected to be of excellent quality, designed to an agreed brief, subject to architectural competition where possible, and with strong involvement of the community and the Regional Design Panel in Ashford. The community facility buildings will be clustered in a user-friendly way, making best use of space and shared facilities but also leaving space for expansion, to cater for changing community needs in the future. Upper floors of buildings around the square will include apartments and ground floor spaces will be designed flexibly and made available at rents that will attract appropriate tenants.



## Great homes that meet changing needs...

### 7. Homes that are big enough and have privacy

The Council is one of only a few in the country that has adopted demanding space standards for internal and garden spaces and the developers at Chilmington Green have agreed to meet these.

Internal space standards will be met throughout the development – over-looking/reduced garden size standards will only be allowed on an exceptional basis where there is a strong urban design reason for doing so, in which case future residents will be able to make an informed choice about their priorities. Larger gardens will be encouraged where this can help to create more varied character, a greater sense of spaciousness and provide greater choice for buyers.

### 8. Homes that can respond flexibly to changing needs

The changing needs of households can often be met by flexibly designed homes – for example, roof-space designed to allow conversion and plot dimensions and building layouts that allow for small-scale extensions or adaptations that could accommodate changing family needs.

The developers will agree a series of ‘flexibility targets’ with the Council at the masterplanning stage for each main phase of the development and detailed designs coming forward will be assessed against these. Careful internal design in line with Lifetime Homes standard will be applied to a significant proportion of new homes, and agreed at the same time. This approach will help to allow families to stay longer and establish a stronger community catering for all household types. Information on flexible homes will be added to householder packs for future residents.

### 9. Homes that are light enough

Research shows that one of the highest priorities for new homeowners is strong natural lighting. House types will be developed that maximise natural lighting and passive solar gain to help achieve excellent living space and high standards of energy efficiency, without creating problems of over-heating in the summer. Daylight factors should meet and where possible exceed the Code for Sustainable Homes standard in principal rooms.

### 10. Homes that are energy and water efficient

Homes created at Chilmington Green will be delivered to the high standards of energy efficiency and all round sustainability that will increasingly be required – the target for initial phases is to achieve the Code for Sustainable Homes level 4.

In addition to a range of water saving measures, all houses will be provided with water butts as one simple way to help reduce mains water use. Sustainability measures should be a seamless part of a home’s design. Advice and support will be made available to help people take best advantage of the sustainability measures incorporated into their homes – this will be supported by the community management organisation and the developers through Home User Guides.





### **11. Homes where noise is not a problem**

Poor sound insulation is one of the biggest failings that new homeowners report, often causing inconvenience and sometimes a real nuisance for local residents. To avoid these problems at Chilmington Green the quality standard set will be to deliver the highest Code for Sustainable Homes standard for airborne and impact sound insulation in separating structures in new homes. This will be demonstrated with a sound test.

### **12. Homes for all tenures and incomes**

Chilmington Green will eventually be the size of a small town – so it needs to provide for the varied needs of the people who will live there, in just the same way as any established town does. Everyone’s housing needs depend on what they can afford; their household size and make-up; and special needs they have – for example, people with physical or sensory disabilities.

The target range is that 30% of new homes at Chilmington Green will be affordable and cater for a wide range of needs – in the early years when development costs are especially high, this proportion is unlikely to be achieved but in later years, when the value of the scheme overall should be increasing, the aim is to try to make up any early under-provision if it is financially possible to do so. The range of accommodation needed will be specified in the planning permission and agreement.



### **13. Homes for all stages of peoples' lives**

Chilmington Green will be a town for people of all ages and backgrounds with a range of social and market accommodation that caters for varying requirements. Many local housing developments in recent years have provided for young families moving in, but cater much less well for changing households’ needs as those families grow up; children move away; parents retire and eventually may need supported accommodation.

A clear approach will be developed to identify the range of accommodation needed to cater for all stages of peoples’ lives for example, supported accommodation. This will be specified in the planning permission and agreement.

### **14. Homes designed for Chilmington, setting high standards**

Chilmington Green will be large enough to accommodate a wide range of housing and variation in style and character. However this variation must have a logic and pattern to it so that the place becomes a coherent blend of smaller neighbourhoods. A Chilmington Green palette needs to be developed in a Design Code that tackles building style, architectural elements and layout (including street design) and the range of materials suitable in different parts of the area.

The developers fully support the Design Code approach and its application to create a place of real character – for example, by applying the materials palette to public realm works and not allowing the arbitrary use of ‘off the peg’ standard house types without adapting these as necessary to fit in with the code.

### **15. Homes with high-speed internet access**

The developers have committed to provide high speed, fibre optic internet access to all homes and businesses at Chilmington Green that who it. Fibre optic cabling will be provided direct to homes, workplaces, schools and public buildings, making it an enjoyable place to live and a great place to do business or study. Emerging technologies will be monitored as future phases of the development take place so that the best practical solution of the day can be used

### **16. A clearer basis for home buyers to compare what's on offer**

Buyers have a lot to assess beyond the obvious issues of the number of bedrooms and price and it can be confusing. A simple system will be designed with the developers that shows how every home performs in terms of internal and external space standards; sustainability features; flexibility and scope for expansion as well as applicable standards such as Lifetime Homes; Building for Life 12; and Energy Performance Certificate energy efficiency ratings.

This information will help purchasers choose the best all round home they can within their budget. The system will be agreed with the developers at the outset so that there is a model that all future housebuilders will be encouraged to adopt.



### 17. A varied, memorable place that residents are proud of

Chilmington Green will be a place with a series of residential communities, each with their own character, with a strong district centre at its heart. Different parts of Chilmington Green will have very different characters – from the historic hamlet with its strong Kentish vernacular amidst lower density new homes drawing materials from a similar palette; to the lively district centre where people will go for daily shopping, schools, medical services and for leisure trips to eat and drink. Design Codes will be produced to guide the masterplan layout for each stage, working with local people. These will show how varied character areas can be achieved but, just as important, how some key elements of consistency or ‘rhythm’ can be created (for example, in street layouts, signage and street furniture, and the pattern of window types).

### 18. A place designed with the needs of all users in mind

If Chilmington Green is to be a genuine, broadly-based community it must be designed with the needs of all users in mind. The way public spaces and paths are designed, for example, will have a huge impact on the quality of life of people with disabilities; parents with young children; and cyclists. Sensitivity to people’s needs is crucial at every level – from the masterplan layout for each phase, to the Design Code specifying materials and best practice design and delivery. The developers and the Council are committed to working with stakeholder groups at each key design stage in the evolution of Chilmington Green and critically reviewing each phase so that learning points are applied.

### 19. Streets that are pleasant for all and contribute to the sense of place

Some streets give a place a positive character - they work well for all users and offer attractive ways of getting around. Others can be oppressive, soulless and feel unsafe. It is not a matter of chance which sort of street is created – by careful design, attention to the needs of all users and regular maintenance, good streets can be created. At Chilmington Green the challenge is to do just that.

Streets and other routes will be designed to provide for traffic but control speeds, encourage safe walking and cycling, bring forward a network of street trees and cater unobtrusively for parking. Careful attention to these and other design details can help to minimise any anti-social behaviour. For each phase of Chilmington Green’s development a Movement Strategy will be agreed which shows how the network of routes in each phase relates to the wider patterns of movement at Chilmington Green and how the Design Codes will be applied.

### 20. Trees to help shape the garden town

Trees are a key, green ‘building block’ of the great garden town the developers and the Council want to create. Carefully selected street trees will help to create a strong character for the main streets and the public squares at Chilmington – in smaller, tighter residential streets smaller tree species will be needed in scale with their surroundings. Detailed planting specifications will be drawn up to make sure that the trees’ future growth is taken into account and to set out the maintenance plan that will be needed. In the more informal nature conservation areas a mix of native tree species will be used to help encourage ecological value.

This approach will feed out along the green corridors running through the development that provide links for flora and fauna with existing countryside, greenspace and woodland surrounding Chilmington. There are also plans to innovate – for example, with community orchards and the planting of specimen, landmark trees. Over 4,000 trees will be planted at Chilmington Green and, to help every new homeowner feel at home in this garden town, the developers propose to provide a fruit tree for the garden of every home that wants one.

### 21. A place that responds to the challenges of climate change

Many aspects of this ‘Quality Agreement’ will help to deliver more sustainable development by reducing energy use, making better use of water, creating more flexible homes and so on. But climate change may lead to more weather ‘extremes’ and there is much that can be done with careful design to help tackle this. Sustainable Urban Drainage helps to reduce run-off in periods of heavy rainfall, reducing flooding and returning water to the aquifers, as well as creating attractive green areas and habitats.

Open spaces and tree planting can help to reduce ‘heat islands’ and provide shading in hot weather. These and other steps will be integrated into each phase of the masterplan layout to help mitigate the possible impacts of climate change.





## **22. A flexible layout with space to accommodate changing future needs**

Normally places grow organically and adapt flexibly to meet changing demands over time. Flexibility needs to be built into it to allow for changing needs – especially in the main centre and neighbourhood centres. There will need to be sufficient spare land in layouts for these centres to allow for changing needs in future – meanwhile it can be put to temporary use (for example open space or parking). The planning agreement will leave scope for changes in the ways local facilities and services may be provided – for example, by agreeing budget ceilings within which provision will be made, but not fixing the exact form of provision.

## **23. Shops, office and workspace providing varied local jobs**

A realistic range and quantity of local jobs will help provide for local residents' needs; reduce overall levels of commuting and help to make the place lively during the day. The target set in the plan is for 1,000 jobs within the development – the aim will be to meet and exceed this figure.

A jobs strategy will be agreed before planning permission is given showing how the planned number of jobs will be provided, including appropriate land allocation. Job creation will be monitored as the development proceeds so that any under-provision that might occur can be tackled in future phases.

## **24. Well equipped and excellently maintained public and green spaces**

Quality public spaces that are well looked after are a central feature of our plans. The community management organisation will take responsibility for all open spaces and apply the service charge from residents and wider funding 'endowed' by the developers to make sure that excellent standards are set.

The intention is to create a real sense of community 'ownership' of public spaces and a financial model that will deliver a special quality of maintenance for the long term. At the planning permission stage there will be a headline agreement on the way this model will operate and how it is funded.

## **25. Space to relax and play**

The facilities needed by a community of this size include play areas, parkland, nature areas, sports pitches and community buildings that can be used for a variety of sports and leisure uses. The legal agreement attached to the planning permission will set out what is required and when.

As the community grows and demands may change, these spaces will need to be adaptable. Detailed masterplanning will need to allow sufficient scope to cater for this sort of flexibility in the future.

## **26. Space to grow food**

A principle of the early Garden Cities was the ability for residents to grow their own food either in gardens or on allotments. In a different age, the importance of providing similar opportunities remains important as people's demand for 'grow your own' has increased dramatically in recent years.

At Chilmington Green the full standards for allotments set out in the Council's adopted guidance will be met and some properties will have larger gardens with ample space for growing produce. In addition, suitably located parts of public open spaces will be identified that could realistically be used in future to provide for at least a 50% increase in allotment provision.

## **27. Space for wildlife and an easy transition to the countryside**

Chilmington Green is a planned community within clear boundaries. Handling the transition from town to countryside in a sensitive way is crucial. Special care will be taken to reduce densities along countryside margins.

A 'Landscape Management Strategy' will be agreed before development starts which includes advance strategic tree planting proposals, habitat creation plans and practical countryside management plans that make sure that where appropriate land can be kept in productive agricultural use until it is required for other purposes.

### **28. Quality public transport that can compete with private cars**

Chilmington will be very much part of Ashford – residents will want to access town centre shops and facilities, workplaces and the railway station. Good quality public transport is crucial if residents are to have a realistic alternative to using their cars, so that traffic levels in the town can be kept at manageable levels. A costed public transport plan will be agreed with the developer consortium at the outset and regularly reviewed – this will include patterns and quality of bus provision needed as the area grows; estimates of any subsidy needed; and genuine incentives that will be provided to encourage residents to use public transport from the outset.

### **29. Working to minimise the impacts of construction with local people**

Local people will inevitably be affected by construction impacts as the development takes place. With careful and detailed management controls these can be minimised. The developers will apply the ‘Considerate Contractor’ scheme and a Construction Management Plan will be agreed with the developer consortium before development starts. Local people will be closely involved in this. The plan will be monitored continuously by Council staff and the community management organisation, working with residents. The developer consortium will make sure that there is a nominated site manager/community liaison contact for local people throughout the construction period. Regular meetings will be held – involving community representatives – to make sure the plan is working and to tackle any problems before they become serious.

### **30. Delivering a high build quality and sorting out problems**

Poor build quality has been a problem in the past in Ashford. Approved plans have not always been followed and specified materials not always used. In some cases the quality of the approved building inspectors’ assessment has been inadequate. The solution is to have a well-resourced monitoring regime applied consistently throughout the development. Having skilled monitoring staff on hand it should be possible to generate a positive working approach with contractors on site to tackle issues before they become problems.

A ‘joined up’ service will provide a co-ordinated pattern of approval and monitoring – including building control; planning conditions and agreement monitoring; Construction Management Plan and waste management plan monitoring; specialist services such as energy efficiency certificates and sound insulation testing. Regular reviews will be held with the local community management trust, developers/site managers and local residents to capture and respond to any issues arising.

### **31. Skills development and construction opportunities targeted to local people**

There will be many construction related opportunities created at Chilmington over a long period that can help the local economy and meet local employment needs. The Council will work with the development consortium and other agencies for example further education providers to set up skills training programmes and an agreement that will give local people easy access to jobs and create opportunities for local companies to tender for work. The agreement will also secure training and apprenticeship opportunities for local people.

### **32. Taking stock and learning from completed phases before moving on**

There are always lessons to learn from each new approach to planning and delivering new development in Ashford and elsewhere. It is crucial that over the long development period at Chilmington Green each new phase takes the best practice from those preceding and avoids any previous mistakes. This learning cannot be left to chance – a regular review of what has been delivered, including resident opinion surveys, will be carried out at agreed intervals and will involve local people and the community management organisation. Best practice visits will help to learn from elsewhere. The results will feed directly into the design of further phases of the development.



