

Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Neighbourhood Plan

Housing and community facilities workshop, 8th July 2017

Introduction

This is a report of the third workshop following the Visioning Workshop held on 25th February, the Transport, Traffic (Parking) and Employment Workshop held on 29th April 2017 and the Heritage and environment Workshop held on 17th June. The event was held at Cliffe Memorial Hall.

The emerging or draft Vision for Cliffe and Cliffe Woods' Neighbourhood Plan, worked up at that original visioning workshop in February, states:

In 2035 Cliffe and Cliffe Woods will have:

- **maintained its rural environment, with wildlife corridors and agriculture,**
- **using only sustainable development and brownfield sites,**
- **with a mix of housing to meet local needs including new bungalows/chalet bungalows.**
- **The two villages will be linked by traffic calmed roads and a continuous network of footpaths and cycle ways.**

This workshop aimed to explore the issues and options that related in particular to the second two bullet points in the vision:

- **using only sustainable development and brownfield sites,**
- **with a mix of housing to meet local needs including new bungalows/chalet bungalows.**

As the previous workshop had already considered design and character issues, this wouldn't be included in the workshop. Instead the 'reasonable alternatives' from the previous workshop relating to design and character were shared as part of the context setting presentations at the beginning of the workshop:

Design and character

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Survey and record heritage – especially important for hidden heritage.	Policy guidance and design codes – put information in place to detail what distinguishes local character. What materials and approach would be 'sensitive' and in keeping with local character?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-build / custom build housing – avoid 'uniform' developer schemes – mixed character• Continue building approach that forms area's history• Would need to [be] in keeping with local character and environment.

A similar approach to the previous workshops was followed. Following presentations (see attached Appendix A Cliffe and Cliffe Wood Context and Appendix B Local Plan), the key issues relating to housing and community facilities were brainstormed and then prioritised by those present. The three top issues would then be analysed using a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) table. As a final step the participants would identify three reasonable alternatives for future housing development and new or improved community facilities that would be considered for inclusion in the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

Housing context

As part of the context setting for the workshop, information on housing types and tenure currently in Cliffe and Cliffe Woods was shared.

	Cliffe & Cliffe Woods	%	Medway	%
Total household spaces	2,145		110,263	
Detached houses or bungalows	663	30.9	15,031	13.6
Semi-detached houses or bungalows	870	40.6	32,487	29.5
Terraced houses or bungalows	480	22.4	44,980	40.8
Flats, maisonettes or apartments	127	5.9	16,856	15.3
Caravans or other temporary structures	5	0.2	909	0.8

Figure 1: Housing types in C&CW and Medway

Figure 1, which comes from the Census 2011, shows that Cliffe and Cliffe Woods has more (by percentage) detached and semi-detached house and bungalows than Medway as a whole and fewer terraced houses or bungalows, flats maisonettes and apartments.

	Cliffe and Cliffe Woods	%	Medway	%
Owner occupied households	1,666	80.6	71,853	67.7
Shared ownership	12	0.6	1,114	1.0
Rented households	366	17.7	32,149	30.3
rented from a local authority	17	4.6	4,155	12.9
rented from an housing association	167	45.6	9,841	30.6
privately rented	170	46.4	16,627	51.7
other rented	12	3.3	1,526	4.7

Figure 2: Housing tenure

Figure 2 shows that more households in C&CW (by percentage) are owner occupied and less than 1% are in shared ownership (see definition below). There are many fewer rented households in C&CW (by percentage) than in Medway as a whole but of these slightly more (by percentage) are rented from a housing association/the local authority than in Medway and as such fewer households are privately rented.

Affordable housing as a term is not always understood by non-planners or used in a transparent way by developers. So that there was no misunderstanding of the term, the definition from the National Planning Policy Framework¹ Annex 2 Glossary p50 was shared:

Affordable housing definition:

- Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.
- Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).
- Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.
- Homes that do not meet the above definition of affordable housing, such as “low cost market” housing, may not be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.

This definition of Windfall Sites from Annex 2 p57 (below) was also included. When considering future housing numbers, it is perhaps useful to consider that so-called ‘windfall sites’ will occur in most larger parishes in Kent at a rate of perhaps 2-5 new homes per year, and so natural growth in Cliffe and Cliffe Woods over the plan period to 2035 might amount to between 35 and 50 new homes without allocating sites.

Windfall sites:

- Sites which have not been specifically identified as available in the Local Plan process. They normally comprise previously-developed sites that have unexpectedly become available.

Community facilities context

In regard to community facilities, as part of the Medway Local Plan evidence base, Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Parish Council were required to complete a Village Infrastructure Audit (2015) for both villages. These will form part of the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and are attached to this

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

report as Appendix C and D. A summary of the key issues regarding community infrastructure taken from these reports was also shared with the participants:

- Changing rooms required in Cliffe
- Capacity/storage issues at Cliffe village hall
- Age of Memorial Hall brings maintenance issues
- Food store / corner shop – limited space / stock (Cliffe)
- Changing rooms in Cliffe Woods are in poor condition
- Capacity issues at Cliffe Woods Community Centre – storage and small hall / committee room required
- Dedicated and secure youth facilities required (Cliffe Woods)

Local Plan context

Catherine Smith, Planning Policy Manager at Medway Council then updated the residents on the current situation with regard to the emerging Medway Local Plan (LP). The full presentation can be found in Appendix B but here are some key points:

- Medway is projected to grow significantly from 278,542 residents in 2016 to 330,200 by 2035 (the Local Plan period)
- Need for c. 30,000 homes, employment, shopping, services and infrastructure

Medway Council's policy approach to housing was summarised as:

- Housing delivery
- Housing mix
- Affordable housing and starter homes
- Supported housing, nursing homes and older persons
- Student accommodation
- Mobile home parks
- Houseboats
- Houses of multiple occupation
- Self build and custom housebuilding
- Gypsy, traveller, and travelling show people accommodation

And to community facilities as:

- Local Plan aims for towns and villages with good access to services
- Need to plan infrastructure to support growth
- Particular issues for rural areas
- Plan at strategic level and at local levels
- Securing funding for services
- Neighbourhood plan has an important role in planning for local community facilities

The final slides shows how the NP and LP are linked:

- Sharing information
- Identifying housing need
- How can villages grow sustainably?
- How can the plans secure and improve local services?

- Policies need to align to avoid conflicting guidance between plans.

Workshop results

Following the presentations the participants were asked to identify what they felt were the key issues relating to future housing and community facilities through a brainstorming exercise. Participants were then asked to choose the three issues they felt were most important (results in right hand column):

Housing:

• Small low rise bungalows for local people	3
• Sheltered accommodation	3
• Affordability dependent on working in London	
• Better design of new developments	4
• Catering for needs of disabled people/children	1
• Local needs housing/to meet local needs	9
• Affordable housing to meet local needs	6
• Younger needs – younger families	1
• Self-build housing for locals	2

Community facilities

• Schools – remaining “village” schools	5
• Pressure on school places/over-subscribed	2
• Pre-school needs new premises	1
• Shortage of doctors/ can’t fill vacancy	2
• Lack of shopping facilities in Cliffe	3
• Lack of post office in Cliffe	1
• Both village halls require investment	4
• Youth provision / dedicated facility	1
• Mobile phone signal	5

Three groups then took the key issues from this exercise – two on housing and one on community facilities and analysed them using SWOT analysis. The results were as follows:

Housing to meet local needs (mix of market and affordable)

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy secures % but needs to be flexible² • Existing provision – well integrated into villages? 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small sites could [be] under threshold to secure % affordable. • The allocations to local people – policy of social landlords. • Limited housing (including social housing) for older people. • Level of awareness of opportunities / housing available?
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-build housing • Smaller sites 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased house prices and competition for housing drives up difficulties in accessing housing.

² Medway’s current Local Plan makes provision for 25% affordable housing in developments of 10 units or over.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More specialist housing older people including adaptations – mobility / disability. • Linking small housing development for older people with support services / additional care – link to wider community. • Provide for young people and young families – link to boosting economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageing population – suitable housing. • Policy inappropriate / ineffective.
---	--

Housing to meet local needs (affordable)

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Local’ family ties retained • Modest wage workers do live in the area still – some housing association homes still. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing provision for older residents have been sold off. • Rookery Lodge being sold off (sheltered housing) • Affordability of sites for local needs housing – landowners unlikely to ‘give up’ [market] value. • Access on B2000 • Lack of affordable housing • Are covenants [see opportunities] strong enough
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free up larger houses • Parish council could covenant new homes [for residents / those with a connection with the parish] • A package deal – some market and some local needs (affordable) housing 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of suitable accommodation in future. • Could community afford a site. • Inexorable population growth. • Losing the green fields / land in the area to development. • Prejudice against social housing.

Community facilities

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cliffe Wood shops / opening hours / post office • Doctors • Two good schools • Cliffe Active Retirement Association (CLIFARA) • Countryside 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School capacity – outside pupils • Cliffe limited shops [on] range, availability and price • Cliffe Wood shops – availability, price, range • Indoor sports / gym • Capacity to use schools – overnight / weekends • CLIFARA – outsiders, capacity / long waiting list • Pre-school capacity • Restaurant
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online shopping

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village halls – capacity, facilities, internet, committee room • Village retail hub – shop, restaurants (Cliffe) • Tech / business hub – farms • Youth provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GP recruitment • Growth with no investment
---	---

Each group was then asked list the three most reasonable alternatives or options to address the issues (from the Opportunities and Threats):

Housing to meet local needs (mix of market and affordable)

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Self-build – including modular construction, recognise custom build and quicker to build. Opportunities to use small local sites. Local self-build association.	Specialist provision for older people – linked with wider social and health support.	Provision for younger people including key workers.

Housing to meet local needs (affordable)

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Development of sheltered housing communities – bungalow style. Local needs met first, age specific.	Release properties to local families. More apartment development for young persons (low rise).	Shared ownership.

Community facilities

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Develop village halls: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities • Internet / computer suite • Youth [equivalent] Active Retirement Association • Multi-media • Parent / toddler • Families • Advice centre 	Tech business hub: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for home business / local business • Shops Farm diversification Village hall advice centre	Village retail hub (Cliffe): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supermarket • ‘Pop-ups’ • Farm shop • Crafts • Advice centre

The following ‘other’ issues were raised at the workshop for consideration by the NPG:

- [Potential impact] of dementia tax
- Need to ask estate agents re average [house] prices
- Access into Cliffe – one road and parking problems
- Parking provision in new development
- Mobile signal
- Tech hubs in village halls / farms

Conclusion

This brings to a conclusion a five month period of participative workshops aimed at giving residents an opportunity to grasp the issues facing Cliffe and Cliffe Woods and Medway as a whole, from the present until 2035, the end of the Plan period for both the emerging plans – the Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Neighbourhood Plan and Medway Local Plan – that together will make up the Medway Development Plan 2035. Despite lower numbers than at previous workshops, those that did attend managed to produce some very interesting options or ‘reasonable alternatives’ to address the issues facing Cliffe and Cliffe Woods in terms of both future housing and community facilities. Along with a developing evidence base the workshops provide a strong foundation on which to develop the draft NP.

Next steps

- A. A Housing Needs Survey has been commissioned by the Parish Council from Action for Communities in Rural Kent (jointly funded with Medway Council) and will take place over the summer. The results of this survey, which will be sent to every household in the parish, will form part of the evidence base for the NP (see attached letter Appendix E).
- B. The results of all the Visioning and three themed workshops – particularly the reasonable alternatives – will now be collated and included in either a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report alongside a review of the Plan’s evidence base the planning context and sent to the statutory consultees English Heritage, English Nature and the Environment Agency for their comments.
- C. It is likely that the scoping process will identify the need for a Habitat Regulation Assessment (given that the South Thames Marshes Ramsar / Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Chattenden Woods and Lodge Hill SSSIs are located in the parish). These could be carried out on behalf of the parish by consultants appointed by the Parish Council or AECOM, a leading international planning consultancy, that is currently funded by the government to support NPs.
- D. Following this, the next stage will involve appraising the reasonable alternatives, considering alternative policy approaches for the NP, against a set of Sustainable Development Objectives agreed by the parish council. Most NPs share the Sustainable Development Objectives used for the Local Plan but with a small number of additional ‘local’ objectives. The findings of the appraisal of these alternatives will be used by the NPG to prepare draft Neighbourhood Plan.
- E. Once the draft NP has been prepared by the NPG, it will be subjected to the full SA / SEA and an Environmental Report prepared for consultation alongside it (minimum 6 weeks).
- F. Following consultation on the draft NP and the Environmental Report, the NP will be finalised and submitted to Medway Council for the ‘basic conditions’ test and subsequent Regulation 15 formal or statutory consultation (minimum 6 weeks).
- G. It will then be sent, with all the comments received, for independent examination.
- H. If it passes examination with no or a minimum of changes, it can then go to Referendum.

It is likely to take approximately 6 months to complete steps A-D – drawing up the draft NP. Steps E-G are harder to predict but could take a further 4-6 months.

The parish council would like to thank the following who attended the workshop:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| 1. Peter Lowe | 4. Roger Brown |
| 2. Iain Walton | 5. Steve Mortimer |
| 3. Jo Brown | 6. Pauline Mortimer |

7. Ray Styles
8. Jan Styles
9. Dave Green

10. Mike Winter
11. Gill Winter
12. Catherine Smith (Medway Council)

Jim Boot, Community Planning Advisor to Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Parish Council

11th July 2017