

CHILHAM SQUARE

Community Engagement Exercise

First Scheme Development Workshop

7pm, Thursday 17 June, Chilham Castle

Meeting Record

Note: The attendance list, presentation slides and group feedback for the meeting are attached to the back of this meeting record. The following should be read in conjunction with the attachments, especially the presentation slides.

1. INTRODUCTION

Opening

The meeting commenced with Huw Jarvis introducing himself and dealing with a number of practical matters concerning the venue. After briefly explaining his role as independent chairman, Huw handed the leading of the meeting to Simon Doyle.

Agenda

Simon commenced by asking the meeting whether agenda item 7 (case studies) could be left to the very end of the meeting and possibly omitted if the meeting went on too long. No one objected.

Community Concerns

Simon proceeded to address a number of matters relating to the consultation exercise that had arisen since the first meeting, namely ...

- the impartiality of the consultation exercise and the independence of the surveys related to it
- the need for surveys given the existence of KHS' 2009 surveys
- privacy issues associated with the recording of vehicle registration plates

Simon reaffirmed CFDB's and Halcrow's commitment to impartiality, transparency and accountability. He also said that it is not unusual to gather extra data to both confirm and supplement existing data. Finally, Simon said that CFDB and Halcrow had assured themselves that a vehicle registration number is not "personal data" according to the Data Protection Act. Alan Millar disputed the lastmentioned. He also questioned whether the surveys could be independent if undertaken by locals with an interest in outcomes.

Simon clarified that the surveys were CFDB's responsibility and not that of Chilham Parish Council. Volunteers were used to involve the community and limit costs. Further, the surveys were not being undertaken with any pre-determined agenda (e.g. removal of cars from the Square) but simply to gather more information regarding parking patterns. Huw Jarvis made the point that irrespective of statements made outside of meetings, CFDB and Halcrow had expressed a commitment to fairness.

In order to ensure independence it was agreed that the survey team would in future be selected randomly from volunteers. In order to respect privacy it was decided to record only part of the number plate.

Open Workshop Meeting Record

Comments on and corrections to the open workshop meeting record were then invited. Graham Swan first asked that full meeting records be posted on all of the parish noticeboards, not just at Chilham Post Office. Alan Millar also asked that CFDB board meeting minutes be made available.

Only one change to the open workshop meeting record was requested. Graham Swan pointed out that at least three attendees at the open workshop had voted in favour of retaining existing parking provision (approx.47 bays) on the Square. It was agreed that Table 3 would be corrected to reflect three votes in favour of Q13.

Other Matters

Graham Swan stressed that the Post Office and White Horse both currently relied on their customers being able to park in the Square and would be negatively affected by parking reductions. Diana Holbrook added that there were businesses that would benefit from an improved Square with reduced parking.

2. RECAP ON OPEN WORKSHOP

Simon briefly ran through the most important conclusions of the open workshop, both to remind the meeting of community aspirations and inform statutory stakeholders of developments to date.

Jane Marriott felt that the key issues were encouraging people to use Taylor's Hill Car Park rather than the Square and making Taylor's Hill Car Park more attractive (e.g. adding a picnic area).

3. TAYLOR'S HILL CAR PARK

Simon gave a brief overview of the Kent County Council Members Fund proposals for the village. Tom Reed noted that the community hadn't been consulted on proposals and asked when that might happen. KHS representatives said that the following agenda item would provide more details.

4. KENT HIGHWAYS PRESENTATION

KHS' presentation material is attached to the back of the meeting record. Important points raised include ...

- In relation to the earlier discussion concerning registration plate surveys, Phil Gilbert said that KHS only captured part of the number plate in their surveys. He also advised the meeting to understand community needs, weight them in relative importance and achieve a balanced view considering Chilham as a whole.
- Daniel McLeish advised the meeting to consider safety for all users and seek a versatile use of self-enforcing space. He briefly listed the reports and guidance that would need to be considered in developing a scheme. He also described the Members Highway Fund proposals to improve signage and create gateways with breakouts at both entrances to the village centre (at the bottom of Taylor's Hill and by the Woolpack). The Member Highway Fund works were aimed at dissuading heavy goods vehicles and making entrance more attractive.

KHS' presentation prompted the following contributions and questions ...

- Community representatives agreed that the Woolpack entrance to the Square is not as great a problem as Taylor's Hill because large vehicles can turnaround.
- Community representatives asked whether there were any plans to do anything about signage on the A252 because there was a need to stop vehicles, especially heavy vehicles, from mistakenly turning into Taylor's Hill if they didn't need to use that route. Dan McLeish said that they will look into what can be done.
- Ray Wilkinson of Ashford Borough Council pointed out that the surface of Taylor's Hill Car Park had been damaged by heavy vehicles trying to reverse out of Taylor's Hill.

5. GROUP EXERCISE

Preparation

In preparation for the group exercise, Simon reminded the meeting of the objective of the scheme development workshops – namely, to translate community aspirations into scheme arrangements and details. The particular task of the evening's group exercise was to develop possible Square layouts and identify and categorise design challenges and conflicts. If there was time, practical measures to improve safety and security in Taylor's Hill Car Park were to be discussed.

As a primer, Simon briefly ran through the various Square improvement proposals that had been developed to date. A graphical analysis of the proposals suggested the need for a compromise solution reflecting a blend of aesthetic and practical ideals. Certain community representatives did not agree with analysis. Anthony Perrett felt pedestrian needs were not reflected. Susan Mansfield of Ashford Access asked whether the parking provision associated with each of the proposals included disabled provision. Simon confirmed that the numbers cited could include disabled bays.

Before breaking up into groups several questions were raised by Graham Swan ...

- Where is the funding going to come from for Square improvements?
- Why don't we just proceed with the Jacobs proposals?
- What is the problem with Taylor's Hill Car Park?

It was also pointed out that parking reductions could create knock-on effects on feeder streets (e.g. The Street).

Geoff Dear answered the first by saying that funding would have to be sought, but things had to be done a step at a time. An agreed scheme needed to be identified first. In connection with the second question Simon pointed out that Jacobs' proposals don't satisfy community aspirations. In connection with the third, it was generally agreed that Taylor's Hill Car Park needed attention. Further, Tom Reed said that Square improvements could support tourism and tourists expect to use car parks like Taylor's Hill Car Park.

The meeting then divided into three pre-determined groups to develop Square layouts, identify design challenges and, if there was time, discuss practical measures to improve safety and security in Taylor's Hill Car Park.

6. GROUP FEEDBACK

David Hayes, Gary Ranns and Jane Marriott gave feedback for the three groups in turn. Feedback summaries follow ...

GROUP 1 (see attached marked-up figure)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group initially came to an agreement concerning parking arrangements, but then disagreed. • The majority agreed on parking for approximately 20 vehicles in the middle of the Square, with ends designed to stop parking beyond delineated area. • There was debate concerning the sufficiency of 20 bays – 15 to 20+ vehicles park in the Square early morning – maybe need 20 to 24 at the very least. • Although it didn't meet with unanimous approval, most would like a physically-marked pedestrian-safe area. • Disabled bays could be provided in church area. • It was noted that residents of The Street sometimes park in the Square because there is no space available near their homes.

GROUP 2 (see attached marked-up figure)

- The group started by trying to identify a “strict space” for pedestrians and school children on edges of Square and streets.
- Keeping the castle-church view open means a maximum of probably 28 90° parkings. In an “ideal world” only 14 bays would be provided.
- A marked but passable area to access central parking but not for parking or general movement purposes could be provided. It could also be used for the Christmas tree.
- Identifying a compromise solution is the biggest issue.

GROUP 3 (see attached feedback form)

- There was a quite a difference in views within the group.
- “Sticking points” included ...
 - a balance between tourism ideals and parking provision
 - need for resident parking
 - maximising or limiting parking
 - some businesses within the Parish want more parking (for customers), others less (to enhance Square’s attractive value)
 - a bit of space is needed which is unencumbered by parking
- Possible solutions included ...
 - ensuring unobstructed flow of traffic around the Square and into and out of feeder roads
 - encouraging cars to use Taylor’s Hill Car Park, because it may reduce parking in Square
 - delineate parking using material changes rather than lines – this is perhaps the easiest solution and could leave pedestrian ways
 - providing parking only in the centre of the Square is perhaps the easiest solution and would leave pedestrian ways
 - herring bone parking down sides would leave centre of the Square free and also take exhaust away from homes

In the ensuing discussion the following questions and observations were made ...

- David Hayes asked whether garages couldn’t be provided in Taylor’s Hill Car Park for residents to buy or hire. This would relieve parking in the Square.
- Jane Marriott asked whether there could be any commercial activity located in Taylor’s Hill Car Park to improve security.
- Ray Wilkinson pointed out that security in Taylor’s Hill Car Park varies depending on human presence. He also suggested that there was a distinction between daytime and evening parking requirements in the Square. During the daytime short-stay parking requirements should perhaps be given priority. In the evening long-stay provision for residents should perhaps be given priority.

There was also an inconclusive debate concerning the value of the Square to businesses.

7. AVAILABLE AND NEEDED INFORMATION

On the basis of agreements made earlier in the meeting, people were asked to volunteer for ongoing surveys. The following approached Geoff Dear after the meeting ...

- Gary Ranns
- Chris Duncan
- Steve Martin
- Tom Reed
- David Hayes
- Alan Millar

- Marilyn Sansom
- Ali Ralph
- Jody Foulds
- Ben Glancy
- Dawn Viccars

8. CONCLUDING MATTERS AND MEETING CLOSURE

Huw Jarvis brought the meeting to a formal closure by asking for further comments. He also wanted the meeting to confirm that everyone had had their “say”. The latter was confirmed.

Simon then provided his contact details.

Annexures

Attendance List
Presentation slides
(Halcrow & KHS)
Group Feedback