

# ENQUIRY BY DESIGN : PARK FARM, KINGSNORTH ASHFORD

## EXAMPLE FROM ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

### FEEDBACK COMMENTS FROM WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS 26 – 28 March 2001

Rate each of the following on a scale from (1) – very poor, to (10) – excellent:

	Overall Average / 10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Pre-event organisation	7.4			1	1	3	1	7	1 2	4	2
Event programme / structure / content	7.9						2	1 1	8	8	2
Range / coverage of delegates	8.1				1	1	2	4	7	1 1	4
Content of workshops	8.0						3	8	7	1 1	2
Workshop facilitators	8.0					2	2	2	9	7	7
Relevance to Ashford's needs	8.7						2	5	3	1 0	1 0
Suitability of venue	7.9			1		2		5	8	7	8
Value for personal awareness building / training	8.4						1	5	1 1	8	6
Quality of outcomes	7.9				1	1	1	5	7	6	3*

\* several other respondents reserved judgement on this until the results at Park Farm are clear

#### Reactions:

The following comments are all verbatim from people's feedback forms.

1. I am most encouraged by the apparent commitment and pulling together by all parties to work together in identifying all the issues, prior to the submission to Ashford Borough Council of a detailed plan, to make an expanded Ashford an attractive and desirable place to live, work and play in the future.
2. A very useful and timely exercise, one important benefit of which was the opportunity to observe and communicate with Ashford Borough Council officers in action – impressive in all instances. The outcome needs to be available prior to arranging a similar event.
3. The whole event exceeded my expectations, but can it really be judged before we see what both the developer and the Landowner put forward as Design Briefs.
4. On the whole it was a favourable experience and a learning curve. Although Poundbury was in the forefront of the discussions, there is a need to envisage "what is right for Ashford" and to my mind this was lost to the number of experts that were in attendance.
5. Initially frustrating and somewhat confusing, the process itself became, by the end both liberating and inspiring. The outcomes raised difficult questions and did not entirely inspire confidence in delivery. However, that's next challenge!
6. Good concept which will generate invaluable feedback for future discussions on scheme designs.
7. Very constructive process of collaboration. Positive and committed approach by all participants. Disappointment with final outcomes and uncertain of where this would go next.
8. An excellent event to educate us all in achieving sustainable mini-centres instead of spine developments. I expect ABC planning department to enforce higher standards and have an open mind, especially with regard to highways. As a Parish Councillor I will be better equipped to monitor plans.
9. Congratulations to the Council for being prepared to try out "Enquiry by Design" and for being very open in discussions. Appreciate seeing Poundbury as a preliminary. Good forum for exchange of views and learning more about creating a feasible development.
10. Best community consultation / participation ever organised by ABC – excellent.
11. Good range and balance of skills and knowledge, excellent motivation. Facilitators good at drawing out information and putting together in a cohesive presentation for each group

12. Non-adversarial tone which allowed delegates to express their opinions in the knowledge that the purpose of the workshop was to achieve a genuine consensus. This, I believe was achieved. What was decided must be implemented for any similar future event to have credibility. All the major obstacles and problems were discussed and addressed in detail. The variety of different views encouraged you to question your own and others.
13. Outlook to solving these issues.
14. The event was very informative and went extremely well as a first event. However, the outcomes were not clear. What will happen to the data gathered from the event? Having raised expectations, how is ABC going to deliver the changes proposed?
15. Very good event, although I was very apprehensive to begin with.
16. Very useful – but the proof of the pudding will be in the eating!! I did feel there was a bit too much pressure evident to come up with the new orthodoxy in the final outcome!
17. Useful to have the planning consultants perspective on environmental issues. No reason why the workshop approach should not work very well for defining key issues under RPG9
18. Overall the event was very informative and encouraged discussion and alternative views. This development is possibly at the lower end sizewise where this is applicable. I think, if achieved, a very positive outcome. I haven't ticked the "workshop facilitators" as I was one; or the relevance to Ashford, as I don't feel I can answer that.
19. Very useful to break mould and get all to think more widely. Could only scratch surface, but achieved much in a short time and raised many good questions which will stretch imaginations and opportunities to create good urban extension.
20. The event worked because it restricted itself to the key principles of the development and was well controlled by the facilitators.
21. The attitude / approach of all delegates seemed to be a very positive one and the "spirit" of the event was excellent. Sadly I was only able to attend one day (the Tuesday) and felt I was leaving a gripping drama at the interval!!! I very much look forward to participating in another "Enquiry by Design" event.
22. This was an exercise of good quality and drew the needs of the Borough, planning wise, to the attention of Members and others. A repeat please, but with more concentrated working in workshops
23. A refreshing approach which should produce better places in future. I'm a bit concerned that we may be in danger of producing a set of idealistic rules – didn't we do this in the 60's with towns in the skies?
24. Very useful. Although requiring lots of resources, in the long term getting everyone together for 2½ days would save time and be more effective. Seemed to change planning process from confrontational to consensus building.
25. I look forward to the next one. A great learning experience for all involved.
26. Refreshing to see this level of involvement by so many interested parties at the earliest stage of a development, and good to see than many of the desires put forward at the end were reflected by all workshop groups.
27. Useful in freeing up thinking and, in part, crossing barriers between designers, officers and members.
28. Very useful indeed – a real step forward if the developer fully buys into the proposals / findings.
29. A hugely worthwhile exercise.
30. Good session – particularly "willingness to change" of key participants. It was particularly pleasing that most people felt able to contribute – even if their ideas were sometimes knocked back!
31. The event provided a valuable opportunity to constructively develop concepts and general detail for the proposed new development. It provided the chance to both contribute ideas and learn from others, and I hope, produced a more creative and agreeable solution.

#### **Improvements:**

1. Poundbury as a comparative not being totally relevant, other new(ish) townships of an urban village sort need to be identified and visited prior to a similarly constructed workshop – even Milton Keynes, for its negative qualities, may be worth considering.
2. While half the Parish Council were involved, several of the remainder were disappointed that they were not involved, especially in the Poundbury trip. They are very anxious that there should be some follow-up event.
3. More Councillor's must be involved even if it means a full weekend event.

4. Smaller initial groups (perhaps 4 or 5, not 3). Greater Community Representation, if possible. Government Agency representation more focused initial briefing. Much more visual and graphic outcomes.
5. Ensure that precise conclusions are reached in order that guidance is not contradictory. The group I was involved in discussed in great detail the merits for/against a railway halt, however it seems a decision had already been made to include it in the scheme. These discussions should have concentrated on how to make the best of the halt, rather than argue against it.
6.
  - \* Contact participants sooner as such heavy time commitment needs greater notice;
  - \* Allow more time towards end of event for questions and agreement on basic principles proposed. If more structural issues are to be discussed, e.g. flooding, there should be time limit by which certain issues are agreed to allow groups to sink teeth into site specific discussion – may be worth listing the issues which groups will need to cover so that they are more aware of what outcomes are expected.
  - \* May benefit from smaller groups, but range of expertise and knowledge amongst delegates was excellent;
  - \* Perhaps slightly wider public representation, if this can be achieved;
  - \* Include some means of sharing the outcomes with the wider public.
6. I would prefer a start time of 9.30 a.m. if held in Ashford as a disproportionate amount of time was spent travelling to Post House at peak hours
8.
  - \* Need to clarify the parameters of each working group – we spent too much time on the flood plain in the Urban Development group
  - \* Attendees must attend whole exercise otherwise ask questions on issues already covered.
  - \* Inevitably we didn't cover all the issues – never really got to the heart of what makes a successful development.
8. More pre-event data.
9. Clearer definition of the objectives. Each group had a clear presentation, but were in part in conflict with other groups, e.g. flood plains manage them or leave as is. Maybe it is only the final report written after review of each groups work can handle this.
10. Time keeping on occasion was “poor” and this should be addressed. Otherwise, the general format ran well.
11. Rail Halt, or where the Housing was going to be sited. It was left to one's own imagination. The one improvement that I would suggest could have been better, was the site visit to the bridge. When we arrived there wasn't anybody to inform as to where the flood plain was, the proposed
12. I believe that any person in one workshop should be able to visit another workshop. Have less “brain washing” from the facilitator.
13. I felt we began in too leisureed a style and inevitably the event became frantic towards the end. I appreciate that to some extent this is inevitable, but I feel we could have been a bit more pushed on the Monday and Tuesday morning, and consequently not under quite such pressure by Wednesday (or is that the point?!).
14. Include “sustainability” as a separate working group from the beginning (not linked into landscape and ecology). Possibly needs to be longer.
15. Time was very short and didn't allow strategic issues to be tested to inform the detail and, likewise, little time to test detail and deliverability.
16. I recommend the same team be involved in similar events and the same approach be adopted. Clearly, the time taken up with introductions to the team and the process could be reduced which would make a more efficient use of resources.
17. I was surprised by how little specific background information was given in the initial presentations regarding the site, its context and the constraints and opportunities. It is a delicate balancing act between allowing un-constrained free thinking and pre-empting the conclusions of the workshop, but I feel more information might have focused the debate more sharply.
18. Please, not a 2'6" ditch to jump – very poor. Proper arrangements and attention to safety please in future.
19. We must try and involve more local and younger people if this is going to genuinely produce what people want.
20. Make introductions and initial briefing more targeted.
21. Two and a half days did not seem enough time to cover all the aspects of the development properly.
22. It may have been prudent to mix up the groups so that each area of work gained expertise from a variety of fields.
23. The workshop should have dealt with South Ashford as a whole – a more precise issue-related agenda should be produced.

24. (a) The venue was acceptable, but prevented chat outside the work groups;  
(b) Mix the work groups during the process to provide greater range of inputs?
25. I would like the opportunity for each “specialist group” to comment on the work of the others, ahead of plenary sessions. This may enable each group to understand the constraints that others are working to, and polish up ideas before they are represented to everybody.
26. The event needs to be held at a much earlier stage in the development process (although I fully understand why it wasn't possible in this case). The workshops contents need to be agreed before the start of the event and we need to ensure that they cover all relevant areas of investigation. (I thought the event was excellent.)

**Other Comments:**

1. May I suggest that, as well as trains and buses, that trams are considered for local transport. There are a number of places in the UK and Continental Europe where trams have been introduced (or re-introduced). They are quiet and environmentally friendly.
2. Poundbury has many ideas and concepts which can be applied to Ashford, but does not provide all the solutions. In particular Poundbury is very traditional in architectural design and does not look “lived in”. Has Portsmouth been looked at? Maybe this and other urban developments should be visited.