

South of Ashford Garden Community

Report Back on the Workshop of Monday 30 September 2019



Report produced by Ashford Borough Council. For more information, please contact dan.daley@ashford.gov.uk

Background

On Monday 30 September 2019, two public workshop sessions on the South of Ashford Garden Community (SAGC) were held at Homelands Football Club outside the village of Kingsnorth. This was a follow-on to a workshop held in March which focused on revised development proposals at Court Lodge.

This time around the emphasis was on the whole of the garden community which includes the sites of Court Lodge, Kingsnorth Green (in outline planning) and Chilmington (works on-site). The aim of which was to further consult on the outline plans and to ensure a joined-up approach to key infrastructure, open space provision and community facilities.

In addition to local residents, parish councillors and ward members, attendees included planning officers from Ashford Borough Council (ABC), highways and drainage experts from Kent County Council, urban design consultants Urban Wilderness, Fera Urbanism and the Land Management Institute, developer partners Jarvis Homes and Hallam Land, as well as representatives from Kent Wildlife Trust, Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership and Ashford Vineyard Church.

The proceeding pages map key issues and ideas along with the material collected during the group table sessions, summarising participant views through key themes at the end.

The following actions are to be progressed by ABC, developers and partners. These respond to some of the key issues raised during the workshop.

Key Actions in 2020

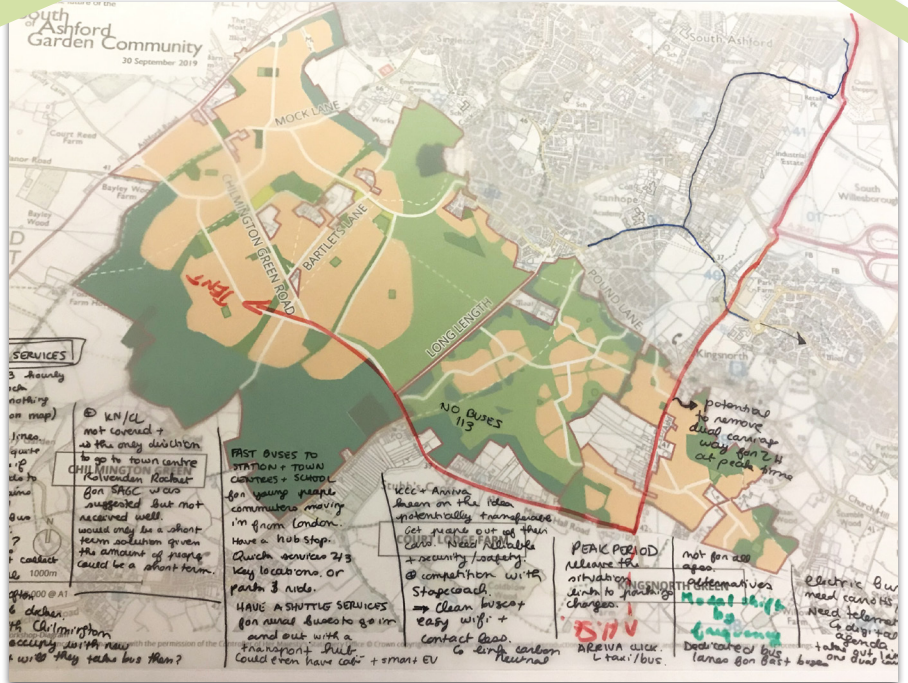
- ABC Culture to launch a project working group on the masterplanning of Discovery Park; looking at all aspects of the design and its requirements. To engage the public several more times as concepts evolve.
- ABC Planning with external partners to launch a project working group to create sustainability policy guidance in line with the Borough's wider action plan to achieve net zero carbon by 2030. Planning guidance on housing, public realm, energy provision etc.
- ABC's Chilmington Team (with support from Homes England) to draft a vision, strategy and programme plan for the SAGC, covering key areas of infrastructure delivery (highways, drainage, facilities), Section 106 triggers, quality monitoring and public engagement. And to identify additional funding opportunities.
- ABC and Developers to explore a revised project governance model which incorporates the SAGC, specifically redefining the role of the Chilmington Community Stakeholder group, including more voices and more opportunities to shape the SAGC strategy.
- ABC and Developers to continue strategic discussions with NHS about health provision in Ashford advocating for SAGC as a key opportunity for innovative approaches to health.

At the Table Sessions

Participants were invited to join one of six tables looking at different topic areas, each facilitated by an ABC officer or a consultant working on the SAGC project. Local residents and stakeholders more familiar with the SAGC were asked to sit at different tables where they felt they had the most expertise. Below are some of the table's notes with lists of key issues and ideas which were raised during the sessions.

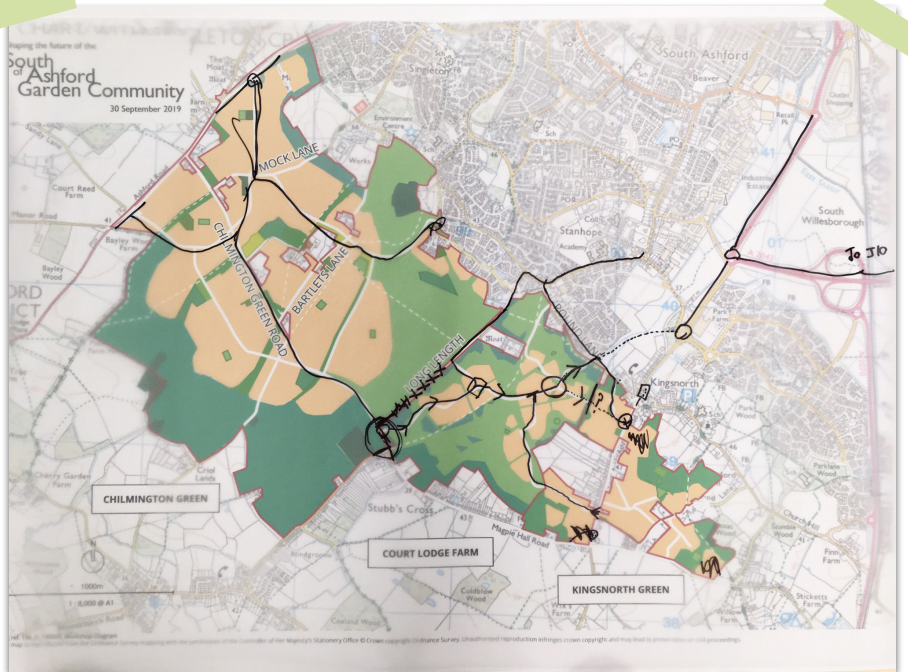
Sustainability

- Put PVs on every house and use them to charge electric cars
- Solar powered bus stops
- Build solar farms sensitively
- Follow Passivhaus standards
- Design-in better recycling systems
- Reduce carbon first, offset if necessary
- Provide a protected space for a community orchard
- Look at geothermal and other heating alternatives
- Provide electric shuttle buses, make taking the bus attractive



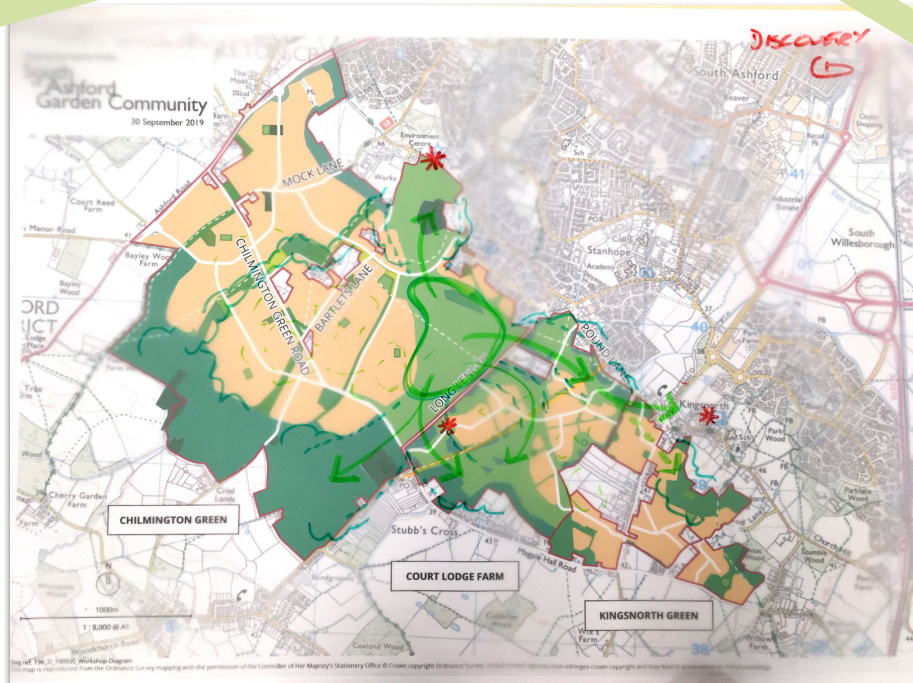
Transport & Infrastructure

- Make Pound Lane safer with 30mph and protected footpath
- Put a stop signal at Queen's Head junction
- Send traffic through Court Lodge centre, not Maggie Hall Road
- Consider impacts on Coulter Road
- Current layout of A28 isn't calming traffic, future expansion works need to consider all road users
- Need to look at HGV movements as they are using rural roads
- Ensure an east/west road link between Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green
- More transparency about sewage management and flood mitigation



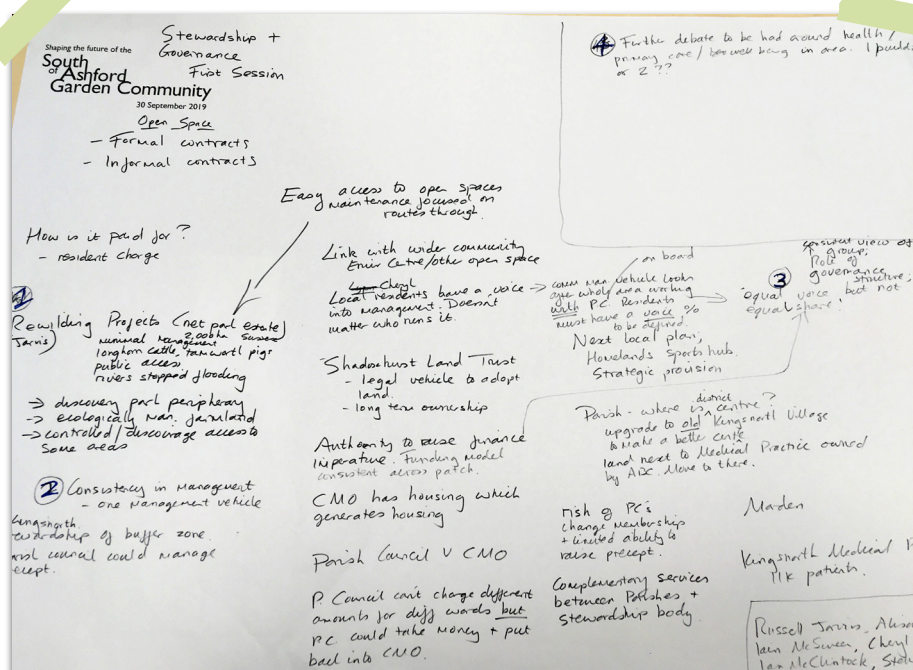
Discovery Park

- Close Long Length and make it a feature of the Park
- Create green corridors, buffer zones and ecologically protected areas
- Clarify the boundaries of Discovery Park
- Reduced development on the southwest corner of Court Lodge is good for the Park
- Placing formal sport next to informal parkland needs careful consideration
- Dogs often damage ecology along footpaths, but they need space too
- Who are the user groups of this future park?



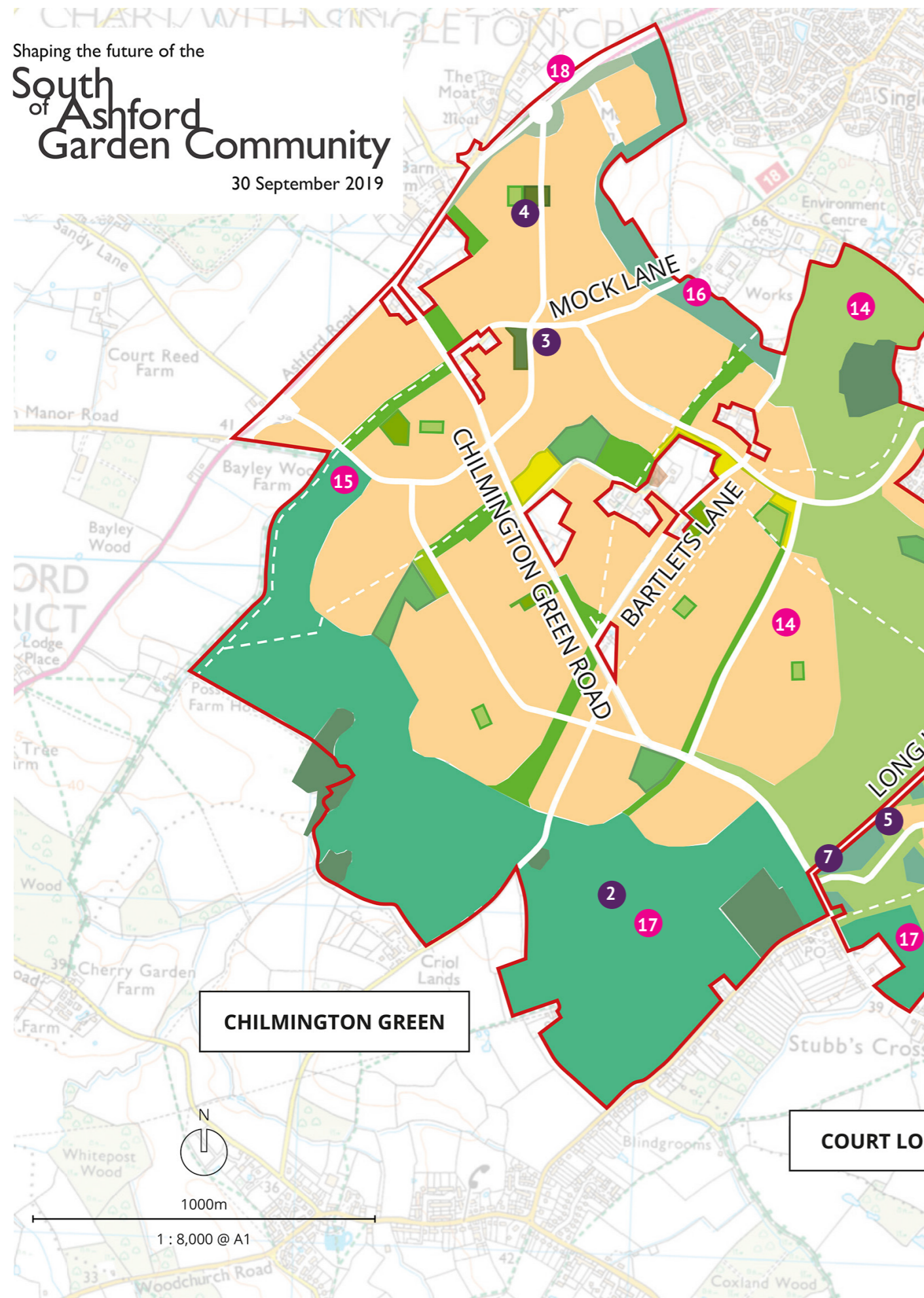
Stewardship & Governance

- Engage local knowledge early on to understand land management needs
- Give residents decision-making role within governance
- A mix of formal and informal arrangements can be a good thing
- Look at CMO and other examples to find the right balance
- Financial model needs to stand the test of time
- Don't neglect open areas, they can be managed by rewilding
- Work with the Parish Councils to find the right solutions
- Must be consistency of management whilst tailoring to different assets



Shaping the future of the South of Ashford Garden Community

30 September 2019



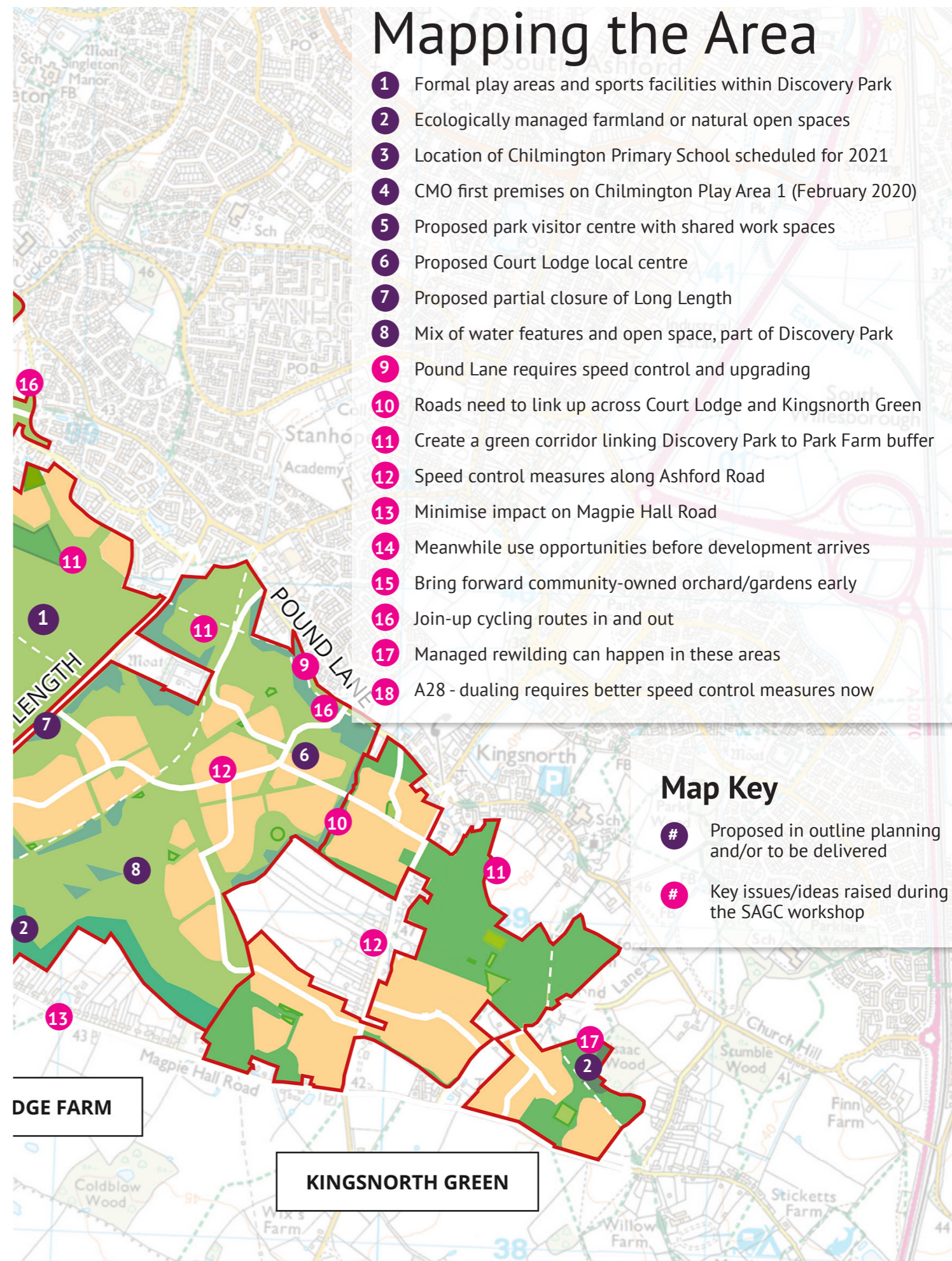
dwg ref: 196_D_190930_Workshop-Diagram
This map is reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright Ordnance Survey. Unauthorised reproduction infringes crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

Mapping the Area

- 1 Formal play areas and sports facilities within Discovery Park
- 2 Ecologically managed farmland or natural open spaces
- 3 Location of Chilmington Primary School scheduled for 2021
- 4 CMO first premises on Chilmington Play Area 1 (February 2020)
- 5 Proposed park visitor centre with shared work spaces
- 6 Proposed Court Lodge local centre
- 7 Proposed partial closure of Long Length
- 8 Mix of water features and open space, part of Discovery Park
- 9 Pound Lane requires speed control and upgrading
- 10 Roads need to link up across Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green
- 11 Create a green corridor linking Discovery Park to Park Farm buffer
- 12 Speed control measures along Ashford Road
- 13 Minimise impact on Magpie Hall Road
- 14 Meanwhile use opportunities before development arrives
- 15 Bring forward community-owned orchard/gardens early
- 16 Join-up cycling routes in and out
- 17 Managed rewilding can happen in these areas
- 18 A28 - dualing requires better speed control measures now

Map Key

- # Proposed in outline planning and/or to be delivered
- # Key issues/ideas raised during the SAGC workshop



Ordnance Survey. Unauthorised reproduction infringes crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

Key Themes

The following key themes offer a broad summary of the views of participants during the table sessions, highlighting where consensus points were had. These are based on the initial topic areas proposed for the workshop and drawn together where connections could be found. They will feed into a strategic plan for SAGC being written and further consulted upon in early 2020.

Getting about... safely

Participants had a broad consensus about the wider road network surrounding the SAGC and its inability to cope with the projected increase in traffic numbers generated by these developments. East to West traffic movements along Magpie Hall Road and Pound Lane were of particular concern in terms of road degradation, HGV use and the safety of pedestrians. A strategic traffic management plan is required across the SAGC, not simply on a site-by-site basis but for current and future developments. This plan should utilise the new road through Court Lodge to offset traffic wanting to travel to and from the A2042, it should provide options for road upgrading where appropriate, help to calm traffic and protect pedestrians and to discourage vehicle movements along rural roads not being considered as strategic routes. Many see the proposed partial closure of Long Length as a positive for the pedestrian connectivity of Discovery Park, further encouraging road users to pass through Court Lodge's local centre. While the discussion focused primarily on motor vehicles, the prospect of the SAGC being a commutable place via bus and/or cycle was generally welcomed, but most had doubts about whether the development would reach a critical mass quickly enough to put sufficient and viable demand on alternative forms of travel.

Discovery Park (or by some other name), an adaptable, multipurpose park

By looking beyond redline boundaries, participants were able to see how vital "Discovery Park" could become to existing and new residents as a central feature which binds the garden community together. Many agreed this is an exciting project but it requires clarity on the boundary, design, ownership and its future management. As a strategic park, it must offer something to the whole of Ashford whilst positively impacting upon local residents. Much discussion was had about the protection of existing species by creating protected habitats that are linked like a necklace of ecological corridors. Key views across the park should be maintained and dealt with sensitively when considering the types of built structures to serve sports activities. Although there were concerns about the location of these facilities on flood prone terrain, if well designed with quality changing rooms, social spaces and other amenities, there's potential to offer something for many different interests. Car parking will be a necessity, but this should be designed to expand and retract as demand changes, just as the facilities should be adaptable to new trends which are likely to emerge later on. Equally, what is in the landscape already should not be ignored. Without much intervention, allowing nature to reclaim areas of the park will be of great benefit to future residents especially when considering the historical and geological significance of the landscape.

Healthy places, healthy people

Health provision was of particular weight in the discussions, not simply a single GP practice but a contemporary approach putting health and wellbeing at the centre of decision making. As part of an emerging NHS policy to deliver super surgeries, it was suggested that such a model could be piloted in the SAGC. These are surgeries which provide holistic health care, off-loading hospital demand and catering to requirements for more long-term therapeutic treatment centres. Whether this sort of facility can be located within one of the developments or not, it raised a wider question about the role of health and wellbeing within placemaking agendas, naturally pairing with active lifestyle choices which can be encouraged by a mix of hard infrastructure design (ie. cycle lanes) and soft measures such as ramblers groups and 'try before you buy' cycle/scooter programmes.

Sorting land management from the off

Given the complexity of joining-up three developments at varying stages, long-term stewardship was one of the obvious issues to tackle early on with many curious as to how the Chilmington Management Organisation's unique approach could be shared. The principle of consistency in land management was welcomed but with a tailored approach to different types of assets. This could take the shape of one umbrella management organisation with several subsidiaries for different sites, or a partnership arrangement between the CMO and other groups such as the Parish Council and local farmers through formal and informal contracts. There was a clear desire to see financial commitments agreed through Section 106 agreements that help finance land management requirements in the early days until a time that these developments reach a sufficient scale. Keeping land management local, not outsourced, and held to a high standard will be the aim going forward; whether it is the existing CMO or some other body which leads the way.

Local governance and local economies

With a productive project governance model already in place at Chilmington, the question of how this evolves to include the wider SAGC (and any other potential development coming forward in future Local Plans) remains to be determined. Regardless of what shape this takes, greater representation from the wider area is needed and from younger generations too. Governance in terms of local economic development was also discussed as there was an appetite for the creation of a business forum or local business network. Developers could provide spaces on an initial short-term basis within their sites for existing businesses to pilot their services, testing the growing market and potentially scaling their operations if demand warrants. It was also suggested that emerging creative businesses and small startups are in need of subsidised space that's fit for purpose. This should be part of a creative economy strategy, integral to ensuring money is spent locally within the future SAGC.

The right facilities in the right places

Many identified uneven provision of community facilities and places for social activities, especially meeting places for teenagers and programmes designed for this age group. They also identified limited access to fresh foods and locally grown produce in the area, suggesting that a development of this size should offer its own farmer's market or an affordable food hub. It was clear that some essential facilities and services should be carefully considered through future Section 106 agreements and conditions whilst a parallel piece of work is needed to forecast how these facilities might be used in fifteen to twenty years time. Getting this combination right will help address isolation and mental health, giving people a sense of social cohesion and hopefully avoiding duplication of unnecessary facilities and services.

Everyone has a role in climate change

A constructive debate was had about actions the developers, the Borough and County Councils and others involved in the SAGC can take to tackle the effects of climate change. While some parcels within Chilmington have begun construction, actions taken now will influence requirements upon future parcels coming forward for planning approval. Ideas included a Passivhaus design guide demonstrating the long-term cost savings and added value for developers; things like putting PV's on garage roofs for car charging and using building materials with high-insulation standards. More widely, the SAGC has the potential to offer carbon sinks by planting and fostering wooded and meadow areas, funding solar powered bus stops and electric bus services. Just some examples of how climate action cross-cuts many areas of development. This led all to agree that efforts to cut carbon emissions must be considered across every theme and workplan for SAGC, not in isolation. This will be recommended across the Borough as part of a commitment to being carbon neutral by 2030.

Photos from the Workshop

Discovery Park group



Report back from the stewardship group



Stewardship & Governance group



Transport & Infrastructure group



Presentation from Ashford Vineyard



Discovery Park group

