

Greater Ashford Borough – Environment & Land Mapping Commission

NOTES of the 5th meeting held at the Civic Centre, Ashford on 8 February 2022 at 1030

Present

Commission Members

Neil Bell	Chair of Commission & ABC Portfolio Holder Planning & Development
Michael Bax	Weald of Kent Protection Society (WKPS)
Peter Dowling	River Stour Internal Drainage Board
Christine Drury	Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE)
Nick Fenton	Kent Housing & Development Group
Jo James	Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce (KICC)
Sandra Norval	Southern Water
Chris Reynolds	Kent Downs AONB
David Robey	KCC Elected Member & Deputy Portfolio Holder for Economic Development
Jeremy Smith	Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC)

Professional Advisers

Jeremy Baker	ABC Principal Solicitor & Deputy Monitoring Officer
Tracey Butler	ABC Head of Environment & Land Management
Daniel Carter	ABC Spatial Planning Manager (for Simon Cole)
Tom Marchant	KCC Head of Strategic Planning & Policy
Andrew Osborne	ABC Economic Development Manager

Apologies

Shona Johnstone	Homes England
Noel Ovenden	Vice Chair of Commission & Leader of Ashford Independent Party & ABC Chair of Overview & Scrutiny

Welcome

As part of the Chair's welcome, he said he was very appreciative of the time that people were committing to the Commission, and that good progress continued to be made by the two working groups, who would be updating the meeting as part of the day's agenda.

Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the virtual meeting on Tuesday, 18 January, previously circulated, were approved.

Chairman's Update

The Chair confirmed that TMA had been appointed as consultants to undertake the mapping of the borough; and he welcomed Alice McAuley, Managing Director, to give a demonstration of the system and the mapping layers put together to date.

He indicated that Daniel Carter had agreed to do a presentation on the Local Plan so that the Commission could see how everything fitted together.

He also said that decisions would need to be made as a result of the day's meeting in terms of the whole Commission agreeing the steps proposed by the two working groups.

As far as the next scheduled meeting for the Commission was concerned – 8 March – it was agreed that the working groups need to progress their individual work programmes, and that this would be a better use of everyone's time at this stage in the Commission's remit. Therefore, the March meeting of the whole Commission would not now take place, and arrangements for the proposed meeting in April will be reconsidered nearer the time. (Subsequent arrangements have been made for WG2 to meet, virtually, at 10.30 on Tuesday, 8 March. Other Commission members are welcome to attend if they wish: please notify Linda Stringer: linda.stringer@ashford.gov.uk or Kirsty Hogarth kirsty.hogarth@ashford.gov.uk)

TMA Enviro-Map: Demonstration by Alice McAuley, Managing Director, TMA Associates

Alice gave a demonstration on the 37 layers of the mapping process that TMA have put together to date. All Commission members had been invited to bring their own laptops to the meeting so that they could access the site at the same time.

Alice also confirmed that the 'base layers' had been put together as a result of information mainly available from ABC, but also some from other national sources. All information was listed in a key at the side of the borough map, and everyone could add layers that they could choose from the list to suit specific purposes/enquiries.

She also demonstrated the flexibility of the system, showing how it was possible to for individual users to draw round and highlight individual areas. It was not, however, possible for individuals to edit the base layers, ensuring the security/validity of the maps.

It was agreed that Alice's pre-demonstration slides would be sent to all Commission members.*

**The Local Plan: Where it starts and ends
(A short presentation by Daniel Carter to facilitate the Commission's
understanding of the existing process)**

Daniel Carter then gave a short presentation on the Local Plan process, as it was felt that this might help the Commission members better understand the Commission's remit and what it was aiming to feed into. He emphasised that mapping could show many characteristics of an area, but that the Commission would need to determine their purpose and how they would help to justify zoning or specific 'tags' being applied to an area.

He gave examples of options that might be considered as layers, but said that Commission members would need to be clear for what purpose those layers were being added and would need to understand how they might be of help in the land identification process.

Slides*

**Update from Working Group 1 on Consultation:
Proposals for the Brief, the Questionnaire and Letter of Explanation**

David Robey updated the Commission on behalf of WG1, stating the intention to consult with Town, Parish and Community Councils and Urban Forums, directly via a questionnaire; and to involve businesses via KICC and housing developers via Kent Housing & Development Group. Some thought was also being given to involving young people in discussions, possibly via consultation with some schools and the FE College.

A questionnaire had been developed; to give respondents the opportunity to understand the process and the questions being asked, an electronic 'package' was about to be sent to all local councils (town, parish, community) and urban forums in advance of the questionnaire; the following week it was proposed that a link would be sent to each council, requesting completion and submission of the questionnaire no later than 25 March.

Once all questionnaires had been received, they would be collated and analysed; there would then be the opportunity for further discussions between Commission members and the respondents to clarify any points, if it was deemed helpful.

#Slides*

**Feedback from Working Group 2 on Definitions & Working Assumptions:
Proposals for the Journey to Mapping**

As part of WG2's working papers, various mechanisms for progressing had been submitted to the meeting. This included: identification of base mapping data and possible further mapping layers; potential 'zones' and/or grouping into areas; and suggestions on the viability of public consultation to define areas of possible opportunity or risk. As a result of discussions, however, it was agreed that some prioritisation should be given to various 'layers', and it was decided that WG2 should

meet to agree on further mapping layers, as well as to justify inclusion of those layers by establishing how useful they might be to the process.

Updates will be included in the Commission's report (currently being compiled).

Future meeting dates will be confirmed as soon as possible, although the next full Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 12 April at 10.30 a.m. at the Civic Centre, Ashford.

Circulation:

All Commission Members + Executive Leader of the Council

All Professional Advisors + Chief Executive

Secretariat:	Linda Stringer	ABC Senior Executive Assistant
	Jeff Simms	ABC Senior Communications Officer
	Danny Sheppard	ABC Member Services Manager*
	Kirsty Hogarth	ABC Head of Secretariat

(* denotes not in attendance for meeting)

KH/ELMC/18/1/22