

NOTES FROM THE Channels Residents Meeting 28 January 2021



Introductions & Purpose of the Meeting

Welcome to the first Channels Residents meeting for the Site Wide Management of the Channels Estate

We had hoped to be able to do this personally but I'm pleased that at least we can at least do this virtually.

Just as an initial note – we are discussing here specifically the site wide area and the wider Channels Estate – as I will explain in a moment, this does not include the Developer areas which are managed by the developers themselves who you bought your homes from and their Residents Management Company – so for example:

Bellway Residents = Channels (Chelmsford) Management Co Ltd for CCMC
Croudace = The Lanes (Chelmsford) Management Co Ltd
Home Group residents Home Group themselves

Those management companies – which for short we call “Res ManCos” have asked me to make clear that I cannot speak for them and their responsibilities...

And on one other house keeping note – please do email in to residents@channelscic.co.uk with your name and address to register so that you can get newsletters and emails directly in future.

Lastly, in terms of format as we are on zoom we will bring up a few slides on the screen to illustrate what we are talking about – I hope that you can see these –

We have already received a number of questions prior to conducting the meeting which we will deal with later

If anyone has specific questions as we run through the agenda items please use the chat function at the bottom of the screen to type them in and we will do our best to respond to them in the Q&A section at the end.

a) Meet the Team

Olly Buck



Ptarmigan Land

Olly Stubbings



Site Manager

Hugo Kirby



Ptarmigan Land

Hugo Kirby, Managing Director of Ptarmigan and ultimately responsible for Channels – I have been working on this project since 2008

Olly Buck, Director in charge of the day to day running of the Channels development

Together we have taken charge of the site wide management of the Channels Estate, and I will explain more on that later

Also, we have Olly Stubbings – who I hope many of you already know

He is the on-site manager for the site and day to day liaison for all residents and ourselves

Unfortunately Olly can't be with us today as he has just had his first baby

We are backed by the Channels Estate landowners – the Stubbings family and their management team – and the large team at Ptarmigan Land

b) Purpose of the meeting

We're here today to introduce ourselves, explain the background to the Channels Estate and how it will be managed from now on.

2. History & Background

a) The Planning Permission

The current Channels Estate was granted planning permission for 750 homes in 2012 and included all the land inside the red line showing on the next pages.

This includes the land we now call the Country Park, which includes the Skate Park and Play Area, which were set out in the planning consent. Most of this land is now available for use and will need some time to bed in, particularly the grass areas and planting which will of course flourish come the spring time.

To clarify – some of you have questioned whether this Country Park was included in the original consent – and as you can see it was. The documentation is readily available on the Council's website and the more detailed overarching open space plan is included on the next pages

This is not to be confused with land further to the north which was to have been a replacement Golf Course, but which is now included in Chelmsford City Council's plans for the wider "Chelmsford Garden Community"

Channels Planning Permission

Ref : 10/01976/OUT Dated 30th October 2012

Outline planning permission, with all matters reserved, for erection of a minimum of 650 and a maximum of 750 dwellings.

Provision of **open space** and a community hub providing a maximum floor area of 3,500 m² and comprising uses in class A1 (retail) and or A2 (financial and professional services) and or A3 (restaurants and cafes) and or A4 (drinking establishments) and or A5 (hot food and takeaways) and or D1 (non residential institutions).

Provision of the northern section of the radial distributor road and junction improvement works to Essex Regiment Way



On the NEXT PLAN you will see a rough plan of what Chelmsford's Local Plan is looking at for the Chelmsford Garden Community

As you can see this is a very green environment with lots more open

There may be an opportunity to add this space in to the proposed Community Interest Company which we will come on to later in the agenda.

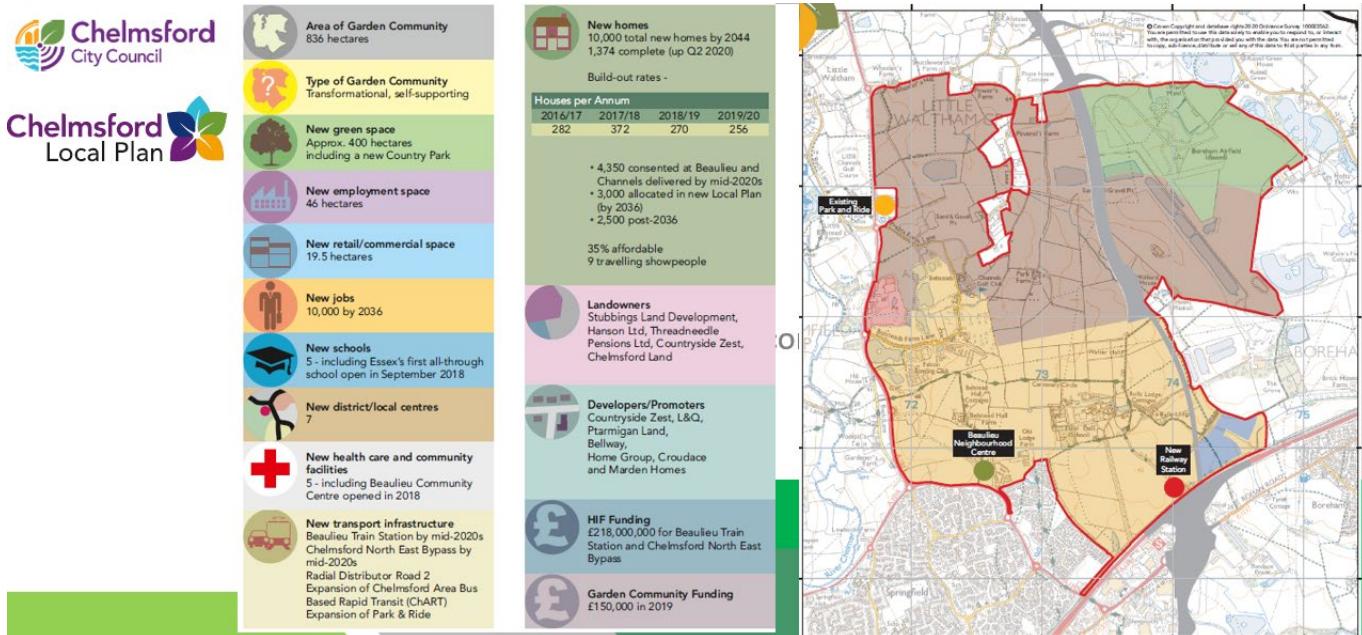


Chelmsford Garden Community

Allocated for 5,500 new homes in Chelmsford City Council's Local Plan

- Beaulieu Train Station & North East Bypass
- 50 % new green open space
- Two country parks and a network of interlinked green infrastructure for ecology and recreation
- Expanded Park & Ride
- 500,000 m² of employment space
- 3 new primary schools
- 1 new secondary school





b) Site Wide Management

The same planning consent set out the way that the Open Space would be managed by a management company and funded through a service charge. This is common nowadays because in recent years Councils haven't wanted to manage new open space and historically have had a poor reputation for managing open space. That may change for future developments but for Channels it remains a residents responsibility.

Beaulieu Park 2 is being managed in the same way – by Land Trust

By the way - the Bellway residents interviewed Land Trust and didn't choose them and although we think they are good at what they do, we didn't want to go against residents views.

The open space across the Channels development is separated into two parts

- Local Open Space** - e.g. Niblick Green in the Bellway phase
this is provided by each Developer inside their development parcel, and then transferred to their Residents Management Co – or ManCo.

2 Site Wide Open Space

This is what we are here to talk about today - this land is also being provided by the developers and transferred to the Site Wide Management Company e.g. the Skate Park. This is the Channels Management Co Ltd or **CMC**

The original intention was to have all of the DevManCos and CMC managed by the same managing agent, and DJC were appointed on that basis by Bellway as they were the first phases of development.

However, they turned out to do a very poor job and fell out with Bellway and their residents and were sacked, so CMC sacked them as well. The Bellway residents went out to tender and appointed POD, so again due to a desire to have consistency across the development CMC appointed POD as well. Unfortunately POD turned out to be even worse than DJC and so CMC and ourselves (meaning Ptarmigan) took over the management of the site wide company in November.

The Bellway residents have also fired POD and appointed Remus to manage their areas on an interim basis until the end of June. Croudace residents are continuing with POD for the moment. Home Group are managing their own areas as they are experienced in doing so for the large majority of their developments across the country.

We'll discuss this again when we get to the service charge section

c) Delivery of Future Open Space areas

There are some further area of Site Wide Open Space still to come – all relating to The Lot 6 area by Marden along the northern lake. That should come forward in 2022 or 2023.

The Village Green is accessible in the main but is not yet technically available whilst we wait for Home Group to finish some parts of their work and the restaurant expansion to be finished.



There is also quite a large area of Local Open Space to come forward on the Home Group parcel, which will be maintained by Home Group and the costs covered by their Residents, and should come forward in 2022

We have received a few questions about the Skate Park and Highways problems so if I may I am going to deal with those points under questions

We should probably include some information regarding the Skate Park and the initial issues with this which may also be a good time to discuss the Highway's TRO and head off these issues early.

Roads and Traffic issues

The majority of traffic issues are currently the responsibility of the individual developers who are required to get the roads “adopted” – this is the technical term for when the Council take over responsibility

since we took over in November we have been helping the residents ManCos challenge developers to fulfil all their outstanding obligations and have made progress on some front, but not as much progress as we would have wished

we have also had a meeting with County highways, and further meetings are due, where we believe that we have persuaded them to issue traffic restrictions on their own authority rather than wait for the developers

unfortunately this is a bureaucratic process and will take time but we are making some progress

3. Site Wide Service Charge

a) Why is there a service charge?

The planning consent sets out a requirement that open space areas should be maintained either by the landowner directly or through a management company. As we previously discussed we are now the appointed management company for this purpose.

Although we work for the Management Company, which is presently owned by the Landowner, we are in the process of converting that company into a Community Interest Company (see more below) in which all the residents can have a stake.

The service charge requirement is in the deeds to your home which contains obligations to pay both the:

Local Open Space management Charge (your developer phase)
Site Wide Open Space Management Charge

(Note that these are not the words used in the deeds
I am just using my own words which I hope make it clear)

b) What is covered and by whom?

The management of all the Site Wide Open Space

Here are two plans showing this in slightly different ways

- blue shaded areas
- with names

as you can see there are some large areas and some small infill areas





Site Wide Areas



Here is a brief schedule of the regular work that is required...

Channels Site Wide Open Space Maintenance Schedule

Weekly Tasks

(M W F = Monday, Wednesday, Friday)

Check Fishing Lake levels and drains Daily

Village Green	The Park (inc. Play Area & Skate Park)	RDR	Western Mitigation Area
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Litter Pick
Bin Collection
Check for debris on road
Health & Safety Check and Walkaround

M W F	M W F	M F	M W F
M W F	M W F		M W F
		M F	
M F	M F	M F	M F

SEASONAL & OTHER TASKS

Strimming and cutting March to November *
Hedgerow cutting once in March & September
Spraying hard and soft surfaces when necessary
Wildflower & Long grass cut once in September *
Beds weeded (Skate Park & Play Area) April/July/November

Green	Park	RDR	WMA
Y	Y	Y	Y
	Y	Y	Y
Y	Y		Y
Y	Y		Y
	Y		

* Weather dependent

Other Works

Barking of Bedding areas once per year in February
Pumping of ponds if overflowing (as required)
Watering of trees in times of drought
Covid-19 related issues

NOTE: Grass cutting - unless otherwise specified:

- The Green will be cut to a long lawn standard (grass length up to 75mm)
- Wildflower areas only cut once a year
- Other areas to a paddock standard (grass length generally allowed to grow up to 200mm, in places up to 300mm, with individual wildflower clumps and tufts allowed to grow higher)

On top of regular work scheduled in this table, there will inevitably be other things that need doing, and we have a healthy budget for "one off works"

For example, we have installed some COVID Safety notices around the play and other areas

We have also just agreed to put a bollard in to Condor Gate to stop cars driving over the footpath.

In addition to this work schedule and one off works, which is done by Olly and his team, we have also asked Olly to operate as a Site Manager and meet residents, respond to emails and phone calls as and when required – his details are in the residents November newsletter which I hope you all received

Then there is then administration and accounting which we are now doing

c) How much does it cost?

It is worth mentioning that all of the Site Wide Areas have been delivered at no cost to the residents

Also, we have a Growth Fund of £50,000 to allocate to new things – more of that later

The original budget we provided to the Developers – and which they all tell me they communicated to all buyers – was around £135 per home per year – which allowing for inflation would now be £160 a year

The actual costs have been quite a lot less than that

Our provisional budget for next year is £130 per home per year

We will be circulating more detail on this shortly and inviting people to comment on the budget and whether they want more work to be done at a higher cost or less work to be done at a lower cost

d) What are the obligations to pay?

The obligations are included in the Deeds of your house

Your solicitor should have explained this to you, and given you the budget, at the time you bought your house

This is quite a legal technical area and I can't give you legal advice, but if you did not get proper advice from your solicitor when you bought your house then I can at least point you to the clauses which refer to the obligations

I should mention that non payment of service charges is a serious matter which your solicitor should have spelt out to you. For example you may not be able to sell your house if you are not up to date with your service charges. Also, somewhat obviously, if Service Charges are not paid the site wide areas will not be maintained.

Historically the Residents ManCos have settled the site wide Service Charges and paid them to the managing agent. This is more efficient, takes less admin, and is cheaper to operate.

We are discussing with the Residents ManCos how this will run in the future, as partly due to the poor performance of DJC and POD the Residents ManCos are in arrears for the Service Charges relating to site wide management, and we understand some residents are in arrears to their ManCos.

We will shortly be writing to you – either through your Residents ManCo or directly, with how much is outstanding, along with accounts to date and proposed budget for next year.

As I said the proposed Budget for next year is £130 per home

On historic costs – the previous management company billed all the Residents ManCos for the service charges up to 31/12/2020. Therefore you should all be aware of those historic charges.

If you have paid already then you will not owe any more until the new Service Charge year starting July 2021. There will be a surplus on historic costs, so you won't have to pay the full £130.

If you have not paid your service charges up to date, or you have paid them and your residents ManCo has not paid us, then that will have to be sorted out.

I will discuss this process of deciding future budgets further in the Community Interest Company Section

4. Current day to day management

a) Roles & Responsibilities

Olly Stubbings is responsible for all on site management and for carry out most work

Olly Buck and I look after the admin and accounting functions

b) New Website

I had hoped to do a show and tell here today with the new website but it will take a few days more

We will go live very soon and email you all with details

The website will contain a lot of information as well as regular updates and news etc.

5. The Future – Community Interest Company

we appreciate that the running of the site management both on the developer areas and Site wide has been less than ideal and part of our remit in taking over is to put this right and give residents a greater sense of ownership and inclusion over what goes on at Channels which of course will evolve as the new garden community delivers even more new and exciting open space areas.

We are therefore proposing a CIC to bring all developer and site wide parcels together under one umbrella and to ensure consistency of how things are managed.

a) How would it work?

A Community Interest Company or CIC is a non-profit making company which provides community benefits

We are in the process of converting CMC into a CIC. The CIC will own the land comprising the Site Wide Area. All residents can become members of the CIC at no cost and with no obligation. The members will elect a number of residents to sit on the governing committee which will decide things like the annual budget and the managing agent. The CIC could be expanded to include the large areas of Site Wide Open Space which will come forward with the planned new Garden Community to the North of Channels, if the residents want that

We encourage you all to get involved and make your voice heard

b) Benefits

Members have a direct voice over what is happening. For example, we will be asking the CIC what to spend the Growth Fund on. We have had some suggestions already, including:

- Fit trail
- Growing areas, including wheelchair friendly beds
- WC for the skate park/play area

We would encourage you all to get involved

c) Next steps

We will be writing to everyone registered to us as soon as the conversion has been done, giving more details and inviting them to become members

6. Residents Q & A

A. When Will Channels Drive be open with the connection to New Hall school

That is a very good question !

It was supposed to be opened by Countryside in 2015 but has suffered delay after delay
We believe that it is currently forecast for late 2022

B. Does the Site wide area include the new country park and skate park, play area?

similar question

Was this area included in the original planning consent?

yes to both questions, as I set out earlier

C. There were several specific questions about issues to do with ResManCo areas – which I have responded to and copied in the relevant ResManCo or developer

D. Several questions about Rubbish Bins

a. Some bins are the responsibility of the Residents ManCos

On the Site Wide Area Bins

We have reviewed the bins and are doubling the size of the more popular bins and will keep an eye on the emptying schedule to make sure that there aren't problems

E. Car Park

there will be a car park close to the Skate Park and Play Area

this is more or less complete and will be open as soon as safety issues related to the building of the houses next to that area allow

in the meantime people can park up at the Channels Centre, or at the Park & Ride

Will there be a charge for using the car park?

How many disabled bays

we haven't looked at that yet – it will be an issue both of cost and also of enforcement...

will check on the disabled bays and let you know

F. Skate Park

a. Why did it have to close?

unfortunately we had to close it because it was overcrowded and no-one was respecting COVID guidance. We checked with the Council and they have also closed their skate parks for similar reasons. We are sorry about this but the over-use was too large to be able to tolerate

b. When will it re-open again?

we will have to see how the Government guidance goes on COVID restrictions – we hope to re-open as soon as possible, but need to be realistic that it will remain popular

c. What can you do about people from outside the area bringing their cars and parking all over the roads and causing problems

we have had meetings with the County Highways department who are responsible for Traffic Regulation Orders – the technical term for what needs to be done – and they are considering

whether to make this route a double yellow line route
we are hoping that this will be consulted on very soon.

d. Can we restrict the Skate Park just to Channels residents?

Unfortunately not, it was a condition of planning that the park be open

As an aside – on several occasions we did random checks to see how many cars were parked vs the number of people using the skate park and it was never more than around 25% of the users who had come from outside

e. If other people use it why don't the Council pay the extra cost

The extra cost is not significant – the cost of maintaining the skate park next year will be less than £5 per home – and the Council have made it clear they will not pay anything towards it

G. Is the Site Wide area insured yes

H. The Growth funding. What will the £50,000 set aside for community led projects be spent on.

It is important to emphasise that the Channels development is still only part way through construction so it would not be right to spend all of the money right away whilst other residents are yet to move in, but we do have the majority of the residents here now so we would like to open up the discussion and get at least part of the fund allocated.

we had some very useful ideas from the Bellway residents and now that we have taken over the site wide management we will shortly consult with residents across the phases about how the money should be spent.

Some ideas we have had already

- Outdoor gym equipment/trim trail;
- Enclosed (fenced off) space for dogs to be let off leads for exercise etc;
- Sensory garden/relaxation/quiet area;
- Water feature;

We had hoped to tie in some of thinking around this with the Council's public art scheme which will be using £100k from the Channels Development to implement a public art scheme.

Olly will explain about dementia friendly routes – also that the Council mothballed the scheme at the start of the pandemic and that we hope to reignite conversations shortly.

I. Western mitigation area Greg Maile

shingle path – can it be resin bound to stop it scattering over Fairway Drive
grass mound – can it be cut more regularly
Tree beds - can they be planted with bulbs

we will review these ideas, they would be part of next year's budget.

J. Can we landscape the RDR roundabout?

This is down to highways – we can offer to do it (and we will) but ultimately they are in control of it

K. Belsteads Farm Lane – will it be resurfaced?

This is part of Home Group's responsibility (the southern part) and Marden's (the northern part) and we will be pushing them to deal with it

L. **Can we put a tree line, hedging or netting between the skate park and the road?**
(partly to help against skate boards skittering out into the road)

That sounds like a good idea – possibly a hedge rather than trees

M. **Albatross way – the possibility of double yellow lines**

This is a highways issue and the responsibility of each developer to get his section adopted
However we have persuaded Highways to get involved now, even if the developers are slow to respond,
and they intend to consult on plans soon

N. **Can the Channels Centre sell milk, bread, newspaper etc**

That is a good idea which we will take up with them.

Post Meeting Note: the owners are supportive of the idea, once they are allowed to re-open

O. **Can we install CCTV in the Skate Park?**

We can consider this if residents want us to do so and cover the cost. Although we would need to be aware of the dangers of vandalism and also the legalities...

P. **How do we know the budgets are fair?**

Good question !

We will be consulting widely on next year's budget and encourage everyone to have a voice

Q. **Can the lakes be used for swimming or fishing?**

the simple answer is no, swimming for safety reasons and fishing for various reasons including maintenance etc

R. **Can we have information regarding the road network**

We will include this on the website

S. **Will the new development to the North include any schools?**

Yes, there are 2 or even perhaps 3 new Primary Schools, and one new Secondary School

T. **On the CIC - can residents be forced to join?** No !

It is also worth noting that the CIC has the ability to combine with the residents management companies if they want to do that

I hope that that has given everyone a much better idea of what is happening and how we are going forward

Please do register with us and let us know of any problems or questions you have

residents@channelscic.co.uk

