

COUNCIL UPDATE 9.2023

LITTER ON FINBERRY

The litter situation on Finberry worsened at the start of September despite me reporting the overflowing bins to ABC on 30th August. I spoke to leading officers on 1st September and Crest on 4th September since when the situation improved. The issue is now deteriorating again and I warned ABC officers on 28 September that they may need to step in again and follow up with a planning infringement notice.



Near the School



Towards the Jubilee Tree



Near the Lakes



Discarded fishing lines

FINBERRY ALLOTMENTS

The proposed site for the allotments will be near to the bus-only link road between Finberry (at the end of Brambling Ave) and Waterbrook.

Specifications for the road are being prepared and will need to be signed off by ABC and KCC, after when the road can be built. Significant changes may require a planning application. The road will then need to be built so in all it is estimated that it will be 18 months before the allotment site is available for use.

FINBERRY COMMUNITY CENTRE

One of the reasons for the delay in Crest delivering the community centre on Finberry has been the desire by ABC to replicate the Pitchside/Courtside development in Stanhope in Finberry. This is because there is proven demand for a second such facility in Ashford. In August 2022, Stanhope

Pitchside and Courtside was closed due to several concerns emanating from antisocial behaviour and health and safety risks. During the period of closure these matters were addressed which included the employment of a security guard who is on site to open and close the facility for groups that have booked it as well as providing access to contractors attending about compliance matters. Although there continues to be a reduction in antisocial behaviour and damage to the premises following this appointment, I have asked ABC to consider bringing forward the Finberry Community Centre without the Pitchside/Courtside development.

TRANSPORT BOARD

The Board met on 5th September. The key issues for the ward/division were as follows:

- We had a presentation from Eurostar. The new Entry Exit System (EES) has been delayed by Macron until after the Paralympics to ensure it does not disrupt Paris visitors during the games (ETIAS will follow 6 months later). I asked about facilitating visitors during the Olympics and Paralympics by restarting services from Ashford where parking and car access is much easier than at St Pancras. Eurostar's response was that pre-pandemic, only 3% of traffic was from Ashford and trains are now leaving full from London anyway. Rolling stock is fully deployed.
- A land reclaim exercise is planned in Dover to create additional space for EES exit checks on coaches; they will not use empty lorry parks at the IBF for this purpose.
- Following a discussion about the withdrawal of the Wye and Little Burton Farm service, the Ashford District Bus Partnership will discuss this on 12th September with KCC and Stagecoach attending. Following this meeting an off peak service has been reinstated.
- Footway preservation schemes will start in Kennington (Oakhampton Close, Tritton Fields and St Mary's Green) will start in September.
- Outstanding work including new signage (delayed due to utility complications) will be carried out at the junction of Somerset Road and North Street.
- Removal of the failed rising bollards and installation of the infrastructure to allow for remote CCTV enforcement of restrictions in Beaver Road will take place in October. Design work is underway for remote CCTV at Bluebell Road and Sackville Crescent.
- The technical specifications for the replacement Toucan crossing on A28 Chart Road have been signed off.
- Ground investigations are being carried out at the Maidstone Railway Bridge north of Drovers Roundabout.
- The inspection of the Forstal bridge was undertaken by KCC's consultant to record the condition of the structure. KCC have received the inspection and Approval in Principal (AIP) report from the

consultant. The AIP report is currently with the KCC Structures Technical approval team for their review and approval. Meanwhile, the consultant is also working on the assessment report, which will outline whether the structure is suitable for the current loading and what sort of strengthening work is require.

- Road vehicle access markings are now going to be listed on the ABC website. The cost of these “dog bones” has remained unchanged at £121 since 2014.
- Three new parking spaces will be created at Tannery Lane outside the sorting office in October.

KCC CYCLING AND WALKING STRATEGY

The Group promoting this met on 5th September. These 4 schemes are currently in progress:



Two further schemes in Sevenoaks East/West Cycle route and Herne Bay (Railway to Central Parade) are under consultation with 6 further schemes (mostly in Canterbury) are in development design.

HEALTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

The committee met on 6th September to consider plans for new Community NHS Contracts. These are services provided in the community, outside the acute hospital settings. It includes continence management, nutrition and dietetics, stroke nursing, wound medicine, podiatry, end of life care, falls and community rehab. Some of this is delivered in day hospitals. It also covers special school nursing and looked after children services.

The current contracts come to an end on 1 April 2024 and the plan is that these contracts will be rolled over and, in parallel, begin a 12-month period of transformation. The change will include changing the skill set of medical practitioners so they can provide services across a range of community services. This will require development of the workforce, increasing

recruitment and retention into the service. The 12-month mobilisation period will include public consultation.

CHILMINGTON GREEN

I had a meeting on 6th September to review latest on the A28 dualling. The developer has submitted a s106A variation regarding the bond required to dual the A28. The developer say they cannot secure a bond but the A28 will not be dualled without it as KCC cannot proceed without certainty over the fact that the developer will reimburse the costs. The limit is 400 occupations (expected next year) meaning the housing scheme cannot proceed beyond 400 occupations without the dualling started. To support KCC requiring a bond, traffic consultants have been appointed who have shown that the traffic has grown substantially.

I have asked for clarification as to whether the decision as to whether the bond should continue to be required is made by the planning committee or not, in essence who is the decision maker.

KALC

The meeting was held on 6th September. A new Crime Investigation Team will be in place shortly which will give Ashford Police additional capability. The new Neighbourhood Policing Model is in place and additional beat officers have shown interest in applying once confirmed postings are available. A new Newsletter is now produced, one for each ward cluster. Resources were concentrated in the town centre and the position is better than last year with only one dispersal order. There was noticeably less in August than July following dedicated hotspot patrolling and the return to "old style" foot patrols.

There has been a rise in motorbike related crime including theft and ASB related activity. Speed limit enforcement work has been carried out in Hythe Road and Trinity Way.

The Borough Council is embarking on a statutory review of its Local Plan. A Local Plan to 2041 will need to identify sufficient land to provide for new homes, Gypsy and Traveller sites, and jobs in the borough, as well as places for retail and leisure uses, community services, and visitor and tourism facilities. To reflect the council's ongoing commitment to create sustainable places that support the environment, health and wellbeing and that seek to mitigate and adapt to, climate change potential sites for new green spaces, energy generation, opportunities for Biodiversity Net Gain, and wetlands for Nutrient Neutrality mitigation (if required) and or nature-based initiatives, are also being sought.

From Friday 8th September 2023, the Council went 'live' with its 'Call for Sites' exercise, inviting landowners, developers, businesses, organisations and residents to submit any land that may be available to be considered for inclusion in the Local Plan. The 'Call for Sites' was published in the Kentish Express and on the Council's website, alongside a social media campaign on Facebook and LinkedIn. This 'Site Submission' exercise runs for ten weeks, closing at 5pm on the 20th November 2023. Further information is available at www.ashford.gov.uk/HELAA

INTEGRATED CARE PARTNERSHIP (ICP)

The ICP meet on 6th September. The key drivers of the integrated care strategy were agreed as follows:

1. Give children the best start in life to make sure they are not disadvantaged by where they live or their background and are free from fear or discrimination. We were told that 1/3rd of children in Kent and Medway are "not school ready".
2. Help the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in society to improve their physical and mental health; with a focus on the social determinants of health and prevent people getting ill in the first place.
3. Help people to manage their own health and wellbeing and be proactive partners in their care so they can live happy, independent and fulfilling lives; adding years to life and life to years.
4. Support people with multiple health conditions to be part of a team with health and care professionals working compassionately to improve their health and wellbeing.
5. Ensure that when people need hospital services, most are available from people's nearest hospital; whilst providing centres of excellence for specialist care where that improves quality, safety and sustainability.
6. Make Kent and Medway a great place to live, work and learn.

These are to be delivered by driving research, innovation and improvement. The ICP will provide leadership, making the most of resources. They will engage the communities on the strategy and in co-designing services.

COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT

The unit met on 7th September. Sgt Richard Batten chaired the meeting. The key issues were:

- Further discussion with Network Rail on siting a mirror on the station underpass have been had regarding position and weight.
- ABC in discussion with Fire Service on the rights that ABC have over securing access to old Flour Mills. This follows a recent fire at the end of August. 5 fire appliances had to attend.
- Deployable camera is now in place at Goat Lees.
- PSPO to be investigated for The Limes.

- There was a section 34 dispersal order on 6th September in the Lower High Street following a fight.
- A joint approach was agreed with KCC (Youth Services / Education) and ABC (CSU) to deal with e-scooters. I asked to attend with the education portfolio holder as a lot of the users are using them to get to and from schools, so the safety message needs to go to the heads in the district.
- There have been 8 referrals to KCC wardens over the summer including 2 from Kent Police. The service is showing its value.
- 11 new CCTVs are now available for views around the Civic Centre.

S106 – IBF

This has been complicated by DfT having granted a lease over the site to South East Power Network through area where a PRow might go back if future circumstances allow. This creates a legal headache as to whether that lease, and what it entails, might stymie the ability to meet a s106 obligation. There is also no desire by DfT to have to include SEPN as a party to the s106 as that will likely delay completion further. ABC legal has some ideas on redrafting to try and overcome. So, completion of the s106 will unfortunately run for a while yet.

Separately, early indications are that HMRC will take forward a planning application to use the site post December 2025. This is good news as the planning decision will be made by ABC planning committee, not DEFRA as part of a SDO.

FINBERRY – NORTHERN LINK ROAD (BUS LINK ONLY)

KCC are investigating enforcement equipment so the road can be in the second tranche of KCC enforcing moving traffic violations. This will allow the B-line to be extended to Finberry.

GODINTON ROAD TRAFFIC & PARKING

Following a meeting on 8th Sept, the issues to address are:

- Traffic volume at school drop off and collection times
- Micro aggression as traffic is essentially single track due to parked cars
- On street parking is at capacity
- Busses are the worse culprits not giving way
- Private hire vehicles are using the bus gate

Possible solutions:

- 20mph area for Godinton Road and surrounding side roads (esp Western Ave). To include a Variable Message Sign, road roundels
- DYL near the shop need to be enforced better
- St Mary's may need to update their travel plan (copy requested)

- Apsley House parking to be more effectively policed
- Extra refuse created (around no 120?) to create additional passing place. Removed parking spaces compensated by shortening the bus stops; bus stop positions to be reviewed.

The first step may be to carry out a traffic survey. Officers to assess.

HYPHE ROAD

I have reported the zig zag line on the crossing near the shops needs repainting. The faded nature of the lines has been highlighted where the potholes have been repaired and the white line have been repainted in some parts of the crossing (ref 745212)



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (O&S)

At the ABC O&S meeting on 12th September the following issues arose:

- The Council has secured £97k of funding to carry out a Heat Network Zoning Study to facilitate delivery as part of the Newtown Studio Work.
- An amnesty style project will be developed to remove electricals from the waste recycling stream. Roll out started in September 2023 in 6 parishes.
- Retrofit assessments on 727 council houses will include external wall insulation, cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, window replacement etc.
- PV panels have been installed at the council owned Carlton Road industrial units. Detailed designs are in preparation for a solar array near the Stour Centre.

QUANTOCK DRIVE

I re-reported the multiple potholes on Quantock Drive on 12th September. They had been marked up with numbers and white lines for some time and I asked about progress (ref 745718). The potholes were attended to on 20th September.



DOMESTIC ABUSE

I attended a briefing on the new strategy to tackle this on 15th September. The key points were:

- Safe accommodation is required in all districts which must include space for children and pets where appropriate.
- A wider response is needed when drugs and alcohol is concerned.
- Dedicated phone for use of sufferers are to be supplied.
- The need to protect children's safety supersedes retaining family bonds.
- Better awareness of what is available is necessary, particularly Clair's Law (this gives anyone a right to ask the police if they believe that they or someone they know is in a relationship with an individual that could be abusive towards them).

Further information is available at <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/service-specific-policies/community-safety-and-crime-policies/domestic-abuse-strategy>



STREETLIGHT VANDALISM

An order has been placed by KCC to repair the vandalised streetlight in The Street, Mersham. The other (unvandalised) light is pictured below.



HOUSING

I attended a briefing on the ABC housing service on 19th September. The key priorities for the service are listed below.



Our priorities in the HRA

- a) Continuing to have a good maintenance programme
well-managed, safe, quality homes, which meet Decent Homes standards, prevention of damp and mould
- b) Decarbonisation
Ensuring all our homes are EPC 'C' rating at least
- c) Compliance with the social housing regulator
Customers being at the heart of everything we do, not just decent homes but decent areas
- d) Removing social housing's stigma
Changing the way we communicate with residents – more inclusive, involving them in service delivery and policy making
- e) Maximising new provision
Accelerating delivery and acquisitions
- f) Supporting the corporate agenda
Decarbonisation, digitalisation, reducing homelessness, commercialisation
- g) Ensuring optimum use of resource
Reviewing income and expenditure, delivering smarter working practices

QUANTOCK VILLAGE GREEN

Delighted to announce that the application was successful at KCC on 20th September with a unanimous vote. It covers the land at the bottom of the Quantock estate, now to be known as Quantock Village Green or perhaps the Quantock Carolean Village Green? Residents of the estate provided 130 evidence submissions which gave us a very strong case to argue. 7 attended the Council meeting in support.



YOUTH JUSTICE

At KCC on 21st September our meeting included a review of the budget and spending on the Youth Justice System in Kent. During 2022/23, KCC offered a knife first aid course which teaches children the skills to respond to the harm caused by weapons. I would like to see that the new service plan provides for advanced first aid to be offered in the curriculum of all education establishments in Kent and that Public Access Bleed Kits are made available in town centre locations throughout the county in the way that defibrillators have now become established.

STONESTREET SOLAR

The Community Liaison Panel met on 21st September. The key issues arising were:

- There were two key aspects arising from the latest consultation from the Environment Agency and UK Power Networks.
- EA concerns over flooding has resulted in 4 fields to the north of the development (numbers 26-29) being removed from the scheme, inverters in fields 19 & 24 have been moved to fields 15,16,19 & 25 and field 26 has additional screening for the footpath to the south.
- UKPN have agreed that access to the converter station will be under HS1 which removed the scheme from Folkestone & Hythe DC. Route of connection is TBC which may delay DCO submission timetable to January 2024.
- Discussions are ongoing with ABC regarding concerns of distance views north of Bank Road and from Station Road where it crosses CTRL. The developer does not accept removing panels from these areas will address their concerns but design issues are being worked on.
- Historic England concerns over distance views from St John's Mersham will be addressed directly.
- KCC have no material issues, the only changes there have been to PROWs is to remove diversions originally proposed in fields 26-29.
- Goldwell Lane traffic movements will be 1 HGV & up to 5 LGVs per day.
- Panel adjoining Stonelees in Laws Lane will be removed to avoid impact on their outlook.

- A further leaflet will be distributed to the community during the DCO application to explain how residents can register.

CHEESEMANS GREEN LANE / CHURCH ROAD

I reported two black bags of litter on Cheesemans Green Lane to ABC on 27th September. I am confident they will deal with these quickly as they have in the past. (ref 18393628). Coincidentally, the new litter bin on Highfield Lane (near the bridleway) is getting very well used, lots of dog poo in it. Thank you for everyone who is using it as it is cleaning up the area and may lead to ABC providing more. Finally, a new salt bin for Church Road, Sevington (East of A2070) has been installed.



SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)

Councillors had a briefing on 27th September on how those with SEN are accommodated in Kent. A public consultation will start in November on how KCC delivers on the following mission statement issued recently by DoE.

Problems	Vision	Mission
Outcomes for children and young people with SEND are consistently worse than their peers	<p>“Our vision is to create a more inclusive society that celebrates and enables success in all forms, with the cultures, attitudes and</p>  <p>environments to offer every child and young person the support that they need to participate fully, thrive and fulfil their potential”.</p>	Fulfill children’s potential
Experiences of navigating the SEND system to secure support are poor		Build parents’ trust
Too much inconsistency across the county and nationally.		Provide financial sustainability
SEND system is not delivering value for money		

REPTON TO TOWN CENTRE CYCLE ROUTE

At the ABC Cabinet meeting on 28th September we heard about KCC funding for a feasibility study for a designated cycle route from Repton Park to Gasworks Lane. This is part of ongoing work to deliver the Borough’s Local

Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan. This study will put ABC in a strong position to bid for Capital funding to develop the route next year.

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