

COUNCIL UPDATE 3.2022

LITTER AT SALT BIN ON CHEESEMANS GREEN LANE

I am grateful to the Parish Council providing littering equipment to clear up littering here are pictures before and after. KCC refilled the salt bin at the end of February so it was ready for the cold snap in March.



PARKING PROBLEMS IN TENTERDEN

I attended a meeting on 28th February with ABC parking officers and Tenterden Town Councillors to discuss parking issues in the town. The issues they raised were:

- Ice in car park during the winter – ABC policy on not gritting the car parks (due to issues raised with the insurer) is under review
- Lack of EV charging points (aside Tesco's) in Tenterden. ABC is in discussion with a potential supplier (but this is subject to UK Power capacity)
- Discounts for parking were discussed for shop workers and users of Ivy Court Surgery
- Communications, yellow hatch lines and signage at Station Road car park needs improving
- ANPR roll out is problematical at Waitrose (due to multiple land ownership) but Bridewell Lane may be possible
- 1hr free parking in the High Street is popular.

These issues are not unique to Tenterden and solutions found may apply to Ashford.

IBF - ARCHAEOLOGY

KCC have received a draft post excavation report from AOC Archaeology on the main IBF site but it is still draft so not in the public domain.

I understand from officers it contains a good summary of the findings from the IBF site and buffer zone. Amazing archaeology was found including Anglo-Saxon burials. KCC tried to get a Bronze Age barrow preserved in situ but at the end of this project the DfT and Dept for Levelling Up stepped in and the KCC archaeological team were not invited back on to site. KCC are trying to find out what happened to the archaeology, including a post excavation report for the landscape site.

It is part of the hugely important new information on prehistoric Roman and Anglo Saxon activity in this area of Ashford and some of it was definitely of regional if not national importance. Some “interpretation boards” are being planned.

KCC would be pleased to give a talk when they have the post excavation work from the site, including data on the Bronze Age barrow. AOC Archaeology may be able to bring along finds.

IBF - M20 SIGNAGE AND BROCK

Highways England and Mott Macdonald are still finalising M20 signage to the IBF.

Separately, and this affect the M20 traffic and access to the ports, the new EU Entry / Exit System (ESS, under which biometric data of all visitors) is known to be deferred until the end of 2023 but may well now be delayed until “deep into 2024” possibly until after the Paris Olympics next year. When introduced ESS is expected to cause delays crossing the travel and may require the re-introduction of Brock; KCC has received £45m to support improvement of access to Dover Port.

The issues at end March when the school holidays started are a repeat of issues that arose at the start of the summer holidays last year and reinforce the lack of capacity at Dover and how border checks should be done at remote sites away from Dover (just like HMRC checks at the IBF).

A2070 BELLAMY GUERNER SCHEME

I reported the misspelling of “Newtown” to National Highways. This was not their finest hour...week...months...or year. Given the project was approved in

2002, you would think someone would have checked the basics in the intervening period. They had time to get this right.



FM Conway's reply to Highways was "Do not expect the sign to be replaced shortly however, as it takes a few weeks to order and re install, but rest assured it is in hand."

I contacted stakeholders about why there have been (and are still) long delays on completing the new traffic lights at the former Orbital Roundabout. Reports are that there were no penalties for FM Conway for delays due to the fact that the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) was given the power to suspend the Traffic Regulation Order that permitted the work. The reason for the KRF's TRO suspensions were to allow traffic to flow freely on the A2070 when Operation Brock was in force. I fail to see the link between traffic on M20 and A2070 but at least we know why.

POLICE REPORT

The update from Ch Insp Sarah Rivett on 1st March to KALC included:

- Neighbourhood review of policing still planned to start June/July 2023.
- Katherine Stevens (ex PCSO) has been appointed community liaison officer.
- There has been a focus on Kennington following ASB on the B Line which has included police travelling on busses, e-scooter education, Hawkeye deployment and speed enforcement.
- There have been additional high visibility patrols in the town centre, engagement in schools and at Sk8side.
- Current crime trends include: catalytic converters, motorbike and scooter thefts, shed break ins, bird and ferret thefts, fraud on the elderly and gym thefts.

- Kent Police have additional funding to use Smart Water. This will be offered to victims of theft first and after that the wider public.

STREET VOTES

A government amendment to the levelling up bill proposes a policy to let residents propose and then vote on new development in their local areas. KALC Ashford is sceptical about the effectiveness of these so-called 'street votes' for the following reasons:

- They could mean more work for over-stretched council planning departments.
- They are potentially divisive because split votes are possible (or likely) and we know how well 52:48 votes work out.....
- A street vote could override the established planning principles on the design of new estates. Examples include garage doors on car ports and the effect that could have on street parking if car ports are converted for storage or other uses which is not car parking.
- Other potentially divisive votes could be on dormer roofs and extensions beyond the current permitted development rules.
- Clarification is required on whether a vote is per property or per resident, what would be the voting age and administration of the process – should electoral register be used? Would electoral officers of the council be expected to administer? Is the voter the property owner or the tenant?

It is the view of KALC Ashford that street votes give rise to more issues and problems than they seek to solve and are better not progressed. They have the potential to create more complexity in the planning system rather than simplify it. KALC Ashford have written to Damian Green MP.

GRAFFITI

I have reported graffiti which is obliterating the cycle/walking route from Mill Court to the Station.



COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The quarterly meeting was held on 7th March 2023. The key issues included from Sarah Rivett and Simon Johnson of Kent Police:

- Knife bin numbers in Bockhanger were 11 in January and 10 in February.
- Kent Police are keen to develop a process for identifying for safer streets (better lighting and mirrors). Initial discussion included lighting in Chicken Alley and mirrors in Duck Underpass from Newtown.
- Events are planned to hear feedback from the community on their safety are 17th March at Asda, 26th April Hybrid event and 19th May at 4pm in the Civic Centre.
- Catapult issues have reduced significantly following work carried out in pockets of incidences in Kennington.
- 12 extra officers have been recruited across the response teams which will be positive on tackling crime.

JOINT TRANSPORT BOARD

The quarterly meeting was held on 7th March. The key issues in my ward / division are listed below.

- Lower High Street, North Street to Wellesley Road (the cobbles) started 13th February expected completion by end April.
- Somerset Road / North Street new traffic signs, road makings and pedestrian guard rail now completed.
- Somerset Road / Mace Lane signing improvements now completed.
- Somerset Road / Forge Lane for a pedestrian crossing facility started 17th February and completed but from 13th March temporary lights will be on site for three weeks whilst existing traffic signals are replaced.
- Dates for the work on Church Road, Mersham (full depth reconstruction of carriageway. Sub grade – new installation of drainage system) were announced as 24 July to 1 September. This will require road closure. Advances signs will be issued in June, 4 weeks prior to works starting, there will be letter drops. KCC to consult with stakeholders, emergency services, residents and bus companies. Environmental services (for bin collections) have been advised. A delay to the start date was discussed to accommodate the beer/music festival at The Farriers at the end of July. I spoke to the Highways manager responsible and have shared contact details at the Farriers so the contractors (once appointed) can liaise.
- The date for starting enforcement at the three bus gates in Ashford (Godinton Road, Bluebell Road and Beaver Road) is late summer 2023. Enforcement will apply to private hire vehicles with only hackney carriages able to use the bus gates. This is due to national restrictions on private hire vehicles.
- A discussion was had on why parking is prohibited at bus stops (specifically Faversham Road and in High Halden). The Equalities Act 2010 places a duty on bus operators and highways authorities to ensure

disabled passengers are not disadvantaged. This involves clearway markings; these are the thick yellow lines that can be seen. They are 31 metres long and a plate will specify the dates and times. No Traffic Regulation Order (that requires public consultation) is required but KCC does “look to” consult. Once installed, KCC expects ABC to enforce when CEOs are in the area.

- Further details were given on the LCWIP Route to improve access to Victoria Park. It involves widening up to 3.4km of off-road cycle paths and footways, new footways and crossings to enhance access to the park from Mock Lane, Bucksford Lane, Singleton Hill, Tithe Barn Lane, Singleton Lane and Victoria Park Path. We should know more by the start of April as it is part of a competitive bid.
- The “stand-off” between Stagecoach and KCC was raised again. Stagecoach say they will not start the service to Finberry until KCC enforce the bus link for busses only and KCC say they will not enforce until Stagecoach start the service. A compromise was proposed that KCC will start enforcement on the commitment from Stagecoach; we will see how that pans out.
- Three spaces are now expected to be provided at the Sorting Office in Tannery Lane, not the two originally envisaged.
- Outside the JTB the Flood Street bridge update is as follows. The project manager has changed. The team are currently in discussions with a consultant to carry out a site visit, assess the condition and capacity of the structure and provide an options report. This is to decide the best long-term solution for repair/replacement of the bridge, one which will cause as little disruption to the local residents and road users as possible. The barriers are essential to protect the weakened edge beam of the bridge but it is acknowledged that they are unsightly. A contractor has since removed the leaf debris that has built up, and replaced the damaged plastic barriers and sandbags.

GODINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

I was asked to attend Godinton primary School at the end of the school day on 8 March to witness the problems over parking. I have discussed with Peter Feacey (ward member) and agreed actions.



REDROW DEVELOPMENT AT “GREAT” BURTON FARM

The developers attended the Community Council meeting on 8th March and two issues are relevant to KCC / ABC role.

- GP provision at Sydenham House Medical Centre (Mace Lane) has been earmarked for £500k of improvements under the s106 as this was considered to be the easiest surgery to expand. But the development is likely to put pressure on Hayesbank and Wye surgeries so these may be better placed to benefit from this funding. I agreed to raise with the Local Medical Committee who are also looking at how they will incorporate Chilmington Green development into the Ashford GP network.
- Highways work on Willesborough Road to provide the initial access will start in June/July 2023 and will last for 17 weeks. Work on the A28/Simone Weil Ave and William Harvey access roundabout will be timetabled with KCC; I asked that they are not done at the same time.
- As part of the highways improvements the traffic lights on the A28 between Penlee Point and Simone Weil Ave are to be upgraded and I have asked that if this includes a pedestrian crossing at the bottom of Bybrook Road where it meets Canterbury Road.

FOOD WASTE



I attended an inspiring event at Repton Connect on 9th March to inform the community how to reduce food waste. This was delivered by Repton Community Trust with tips from the climate action team at ABC. There were free recipes, recipe boxes and food ingredients from Bare Bazaar. Sustainable laundry detergent was given away to raise awareness of the importance of sustainability.

BRIDLEWAY AE667A (WATERBROOK ALDI)

I have supported the proposed diversion of bridleway AE667A such that it crosses the entrance to the Aldi on the following grounds:

- Overall use of the bridleway is low, primarily due to the requirement to traverse the A20 after the route crosses the M20. I feel the route is not strategic and the consideration of how it should be used should reflect this fact.
- The Bellamy Guerner Scheme is scheduled to complete in April 2023 and once it is fully open, the development that it supports including the Aldi Store, should be brought forward at pace to ensure the benefits of the scheme are realised. A public enquiry over the bridleway diversion would delay the Aldi and may put the store opening at risk.
- Local residents will benefit from the Aldi opening as we have no meaningful stores easily accessible by foot or cycle. It is expected to trigger a local store on Finberry, creating a sense of place on Finberry.
- Diverting the bridleway so it runs alongside Waterbrook Ave would potentially allow only savvy and well-behaved horses to use the bridleway.
- The bridleway already passes the entry to the (as yet undeveloped) Amazon warehouse. This would have the same issues of traffic movements across the bridleway. So, it is established that there will be acceptable traffic movements across the bridleway, and I doubt the Aldi traffic movements will be no more than at Amazon.

Following meetings I had with CCE and correspondence with ABC and KCC officers, KCC have withdrawn their objection as have the British Horse Society. There no further delays to the development proceeding (in respect to the PROW issue anyway). The KCC response was as follows:

“We (KCC) are withdrawing our objection on this basis.

It’s a very disappointing outcome, which in reality goes back to an extremely poor decision by Ashford Borough Council at the planning stage, with very little regard to National or their own planning policy:

NPPF-

Section 8 – Promoting Safe and Healthy communities. This includes comments on providing easy pedestrian and cycle connections, clear and legible routes, and enabling healthy lifestyles through, among other elements, layouts that encourage walking and cycling.

Section 9 – Promoting Sustainable Transport. This section states that planning policies should, among other transport needs, provide for attractive and well-designed walking and cycling networks with supporting facilities such as secure cycle parking (drawing on Local

Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans). Within this context, applications for development should give first priority to pedestrian and cycle movements and create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles

We are satisfied that the Church Commissioners have now finally demonstrated that no other alternative route is feasible for this site. We note that had they undertaken this work in the first place we would not have been left with no option but to object and unnecessary delays for the development to commence could have been avoided.

We look forward to working with the developers to secure the safest design possible of the order route. In particular to minimise the very real risk at the vehicular and pedestrian access points into the Aldi site.”

PARK ROAD / FAVERSHAM ROAD

I have asked Highways to look at the sightlines when turning right from Park Road into Faversham Road as visibility is not great. They have been in touch with the hedge owners.



MARTYRS FIELD

The information panel at Queen Mothers Park / Martyr's Field has been damaged and removed. It was supplied by Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP) and Councillors are investigating a replacement.



QUANTOCK VILLAGE GREEN

The Land Registry Title has recently been updated with the new landowner's details (Bluesky Properties Limited), so KCC have written to them advising of the Village Green application and they have until Tuesday 25th April to respond with any comments.

If they do not respond, then I think it is perfectly reasonable to say (and hopefully the KCC Member Panel would agree) that KCC have made every effort to contact the landowner in this matter and therefore should proceed to the determination of the application.

REPORTS SUBMITTED

Missing footpath sign AE398/3 Feather Bed Lane (ref 706813)

Fly tipping Cheesemans Green Lane (ref 16777501)

Fly tipping Gill Lane (ref 16777684)

Fly tipping Feather Bed Lane (ref 16777717) – may be off the highway

5 street lights in Avocet Road and 2 in Nuthatch Drive not working (ref 699699 – area not adopted but KCC agreed to report to Crest)

Salt bin requested at Romney Point in Repton now it has been adopted

GP SERVICES

The Health Scrutiny meeting at KCC on 28th March heard about service improvements to GP services in Kent. Between July 2022 and January 2023 6.3m appointments were delivered in general practice across the 1.6m population.

- Folkestone has delivered and extra 10,000 appointments by better use of technology (e-consult etc)
- Gillingham have reduced avoidable GP appointments releasing 2.6% of GP time.
- A GP attraction package has attracted new GPs to Swale, Medway and Thanet.

- A new Health Centre will open in Edenbridge in November 2023 (having been planned for in 2017).

Our next meeting in 10th May and it is hoped that we will hear how learning from what is happening elsewhere in Kent can improve service delivery in Ashford and Tenterden.

NEWTOWN WORKS

As part of the debate at ABC Cabinet meeting on 30th March I took the opportunity of pointing out the benefit to the wider community to the development in addition to the local jobs and college education facilities that will come forward as part of the development. The community benefits under the s106 agreement include:

- £277k towards Ashford Stour Primary Care Network to enhance local GP services
- £96k towards natural green spaces in the vicinity of the works
- £309k towards town centre play area
- £141k towards indoor sport in the urban area
- £386k towards outdoor sport
- £355k towards highways improvements at the Flanders Roundabout

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