

## COUNCIL UPDATE 10.2023

### **REHABILITATION CARE AT WEST VIEW, TENTERDEN**

The KCC Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) were briefed on 7<sup>th</sup> October on a pilot scheme in East Kent to speed up patients return to home following discharge. This is because patients are staying in hospital when they don't need to. A six-month trial will start at two community hospitals, Westbrook House in Margate and West View in Tenterden providing rehabilitation after strokes, falls, broken hips and sub-acute patients who need treatment after a stay in an acute hospital. It will involve seven-day rehabilitation with the support of family and carers delivered by an additional 30 beds and 25 new Home First Support recruits (expected to start work in November). There are proven advantages in having families and carers supporting the patients rehabilitation, particularly at weekends, so they can get to spend quality time with recovering patients.

### **HYPER ACUTE STROKE UNIT, WHH**

The following timetable for the implementation was discussed at HOSC. An explanation for the delay of implementation was "this is in part due to the pandemic but also due to the need to secure significant new NHS investment for the build that's needed. As mentioned in the ICB paper, this will take place in the second phase due to capital constraints."

Table 1: Timescales for developing the three HASUs

Site	Works	Completion of capital works
Dartford Darent Valley Hospital (DVH)	Refurbishment of existing and additional space	October 2023
Maldstone Maldstone Hospital (MGH)	Refurbishment of existing and additional space	December 2023
Ashford William Harvey Hospital (WHH)	New build forward extension	Q3 2025/26

### **CENTRAL ASHFORD HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

I have added to the central HIP a request for "Keep Clear" road markings at the Barrow Hill roundabout. This will assist with keeping the roundabout moving when the M20 is closed, and traffic is diverted along A292.



The feedback I received included that markings were provided during Op Stack and the early days of Brock. Replacement linings may now be needed following completion of the moveable barrier work which will minimise disruption.

### **BYBROOK ROAD**

The outstanding Bybrook Road works, including the 20mph speed roundels, will be completed by the contractor during w/c 6th November with the usual caveat of weather permitting.



### **FINBERRY HML**

HML have set out their case for suspending their activities a 4-page letter. They say that the reason for suspension was non-payment of invoices by residents due to escalating charges.

The counterfactual was put by the Residents Association in a 2-page letter. In essence it set out HML failure to communicate over escalating charges and lack of ability to challenge whether services have been delivered satisfactorily.

Meanwhile the estate is starting to look shabby with bins close to overflowing, dog poo rife, missing lifebuoys on the balancing ponds, lack of bins in the right places, broken glass in the playing fields, overgrowing ponds and trees dying. Streetlights are not functioning (this may be a Crest issue) - noticeable now the nights are drawing in.

I have investigated what action ABC can take in respect of Crest. The HML letter was incorrect where it says that Finberry Estate Management Limited is not involved in the sale of houses as it is a wholly owned subsidiary of Crest. The s106 requires Crest to ensure that estate management is provided including effective liaison with residents including representation. It is my view that there is a planning enforcement issue. At the very least Crest should take a proactive interest in resolving this situation ASAP.

There is an environmental concern regarding the bins, littering and health and safety around the ponds and the play areas. It is approaching the situation that ABC will have to step in. When they do, ABC should expect to be reimbursed by HML.

Here are the minutes from the ABC Council meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> October. The key issues are highlighted.

Question from Councillor Bartlett to Councillor Harman, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing Delivery and Communication “Recent events with the management company at Finberry have left residents without grounds maintenance, with leaves and weeds accumulating on roads and paths, litter bins not being emptied, broken glass in the playing areas, missing lifebuoys at the drainage ponds and litter accumulating across the village. These each have environmental and health and safety issues for the public. What action will ABC now take to support residents?”

Reply by Councillor Harman “Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Bartlett for your question. As Councillor Bartlett will be aware, Crest, the developer at Finberry, are still on site. Although there is a managing agent in place at Finberry, **Crest are intervening to ensure that obligations from both the managing agents and residents are being met.** From correspondence with the planning team, Councillor Bartlett is also aware that both **the planning service and street scene team have provided guidance on the obligations of the managing agents and the potential for legal action from the Council should waste accumulate.** I visited Finberry today. It’s a large development so I drove around a large part of it as well as walking around on foot. Some of the grass verges did look in need of a cut and there were certainly places where weeds are growing. The playgrounds and bins I saw were tidy and there was certainly less litter than I routinely see in my own country lanes. It was reported in the KE last week that Finberry residents are taking control of the issues in their community and are forming a Residents Association - which is absolutely the right thing to do. With this in place they will be able to engage collectively with the management company and the developer and bring pressure to address their concerns. This is an action that is actually being replicated across the Borough. The performance of

management companies is a nationwide issue that is included in a review of the housing market announced in February by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). It is expected that the CMA will delve into the transparency of freehold estate charges and agreements and whether the obligations and costs on new homeowners are considered reasonable and fair. Obviously, it will be some time before the report comes forward. As a Council we are at an important time in our Local Plan making process, embarking on the next iteration of our Local Plan. This is a time for the Council to consider its options and, in the absence of any apparent immediate action by our Government, the Local Plan Review provides us with an opportunity. ***It is entirely possible to conduct a review of the use of management companies for future developments and maybe consider proposals for alternate options with greater local interest and control for residents.*** This should be considered for the new Local Plan via the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group, which is of course, chaired by Councillor Bartlett and I hope he will bring that forward to that Task Group.”

Supplementary Question by Councillor Bartlett “Thank you for that response. It seems that we are in some agreement that a policy is required in this Council’s Local Plan to deal with circumstances where the Management Company fails as is the case in Finberry and may also be the case in Bridgefield and Repton although I am not familiar with the precise arrangements in those areas. After all, we all pay the same Council Tax and we expect the same minimum level of services. Will the Portfolio Holder join with me and condemn the use of management fees as a cash cow during the cost of living crisis?”

Reply by Councillor Harman “Local Councils of all levels, generally, are not willing to adopt new assets such as highways, lighting, verge maintenance etc. so I find myself unable to ‘condemn’ the use of Management Companies as it stands at the moment as there is no real alternative when thinking about the assets that need to be maintained. The additional Council Tax generated, after the provision of basic services, does not cover the cost of maintaining the quality of the placemaking that Government are requiring throughout the planning system. In the absence of this adoption, place management organisations have arisen. In the last Local Plan process, Ashford Borough Council recognised that the way in which the provision of public space is developed and maintained has a direct impact on the quality of life for the Borough’s residents. As a result, Ashford Borough Council has tried to innovate at the Chilmington Community Management Organisation which was created. Also, in the last Local Plan, the importance of the issue of governance of public space was recognised through Policy IMP4 ‘Governance of Public Community Space and Facilities’ which supports community governance models as a point of principle. It also seeks to ensure that community spaces and facilities are managed to a high standard. I think that the process of how we achieve this is something that the Local Plan and

Planning Policy Task Group will enjoy debating and I do support that we look for alternatives.”

***In summary, ABC are exploring the potential for legal action and have requested a site meeting.***

## **OAKLANDS PARKING**

The outcome of the parking survey is as follows:

- There was not majority support for a residents permit scheme (6 out of 8 responses only 1 supported a scheme).
- 8 spaces are not enough given the number of cars owned by residents. More spaces are requested. The situation has deteriorated following the Royal Oak re-opening with customers using Oaklands. Residents wanted a small section of the green to be extended to cater for back up parking for 2 cars. However, no development is allowed on any village green and even if it was applied for the loss of green amenity space would not be supported by ABC housing.
- The raised kerb outside number 8-5 is considered by residents a trip hazard by KCC highways, but KCC responded “ I have inspected this today to find no issues with this footway as the footway has not sunk as it is the same level as the garden paths and if raised it would cause trip hazards coming out of the houses, I believe this footway has been like this since it was put in as you can see the original concrete base for the kerbs and is also the same level of footway going towards the street.”
- ***Potholes on the ABC owned land (marked with X on the white area on the map below) have been reported*** as it is dangerous trip hazard especially in the winter dark, ice, flooded puddles. The repair team were advised on 26<sup>th</sup> September. The timescale may be long as only 1 out of 8 houses is still in ABC ownership. A resident has asked for parking lines to encourage better parking and double yellow on the corners of the junction.



- Concerns were expressed about the process in ABC granting planning consent for a dropped down kerb at No 3. However, ABC advise that permission was granted for off road parking/vehicle crossover under application reference PA/2023/0719 on 6 July 2023 and that two neighbours either side of the property in question were consulted as is the norm.

- A long-standing council sign which said, "Residents Parking Only" was removed and replaced with "No parking, turning point only" and "24 access required" on the council owned signpost. This new sign was removed on 14<sup>th</sup> October following an intervention by ABC / KCC.

### **M20 BRIDGE LIGHTING**

I have reported 6 broken lights on the M20 footbridge between M&S and Eureka. The handover to National Highways has not yet been completed so in the meantime KCC have agreed to sort out repairs.

### **IBF FOOTPATH**

I am pleased to see the DfT has reinstated the washed-out path near Church Road. This follows my report to KCC in May, so it took time for the DfT to act but at least they have now.



### **WATERBROOK LINK ROAD**

It is expected that a full planning application for the Waterbrook Link Road and Bridge over the East Stour will be submitted by Crest in November 2023 and a decision made in Spring 2024. Thereafter, it is envisaged that construction of the Waterbrook Link Road and Bridge will take place until Autumn 2024, after which the Finberry allotments can be delivered. This is a significant delay to the delivery of the allotments however it has been agreed that the allotments can be delivered after the Waterbrook Link Road and Bridge.

### **NEW ABC WASTE COLLECTION CONTRACT**

The new waste collection contract with Suez (currently Biffa) starts in March 2024 and was discussed at a council meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> October. Small electricals will no longer be collected by placing them in a carrier bag on top of the grey waste bins but will now need to be taken to a local roadshow where they will be collected separately. A change is to be made with textiles which

will no longer be collected by placing them in a carrier bag on top of the green recycling bin.

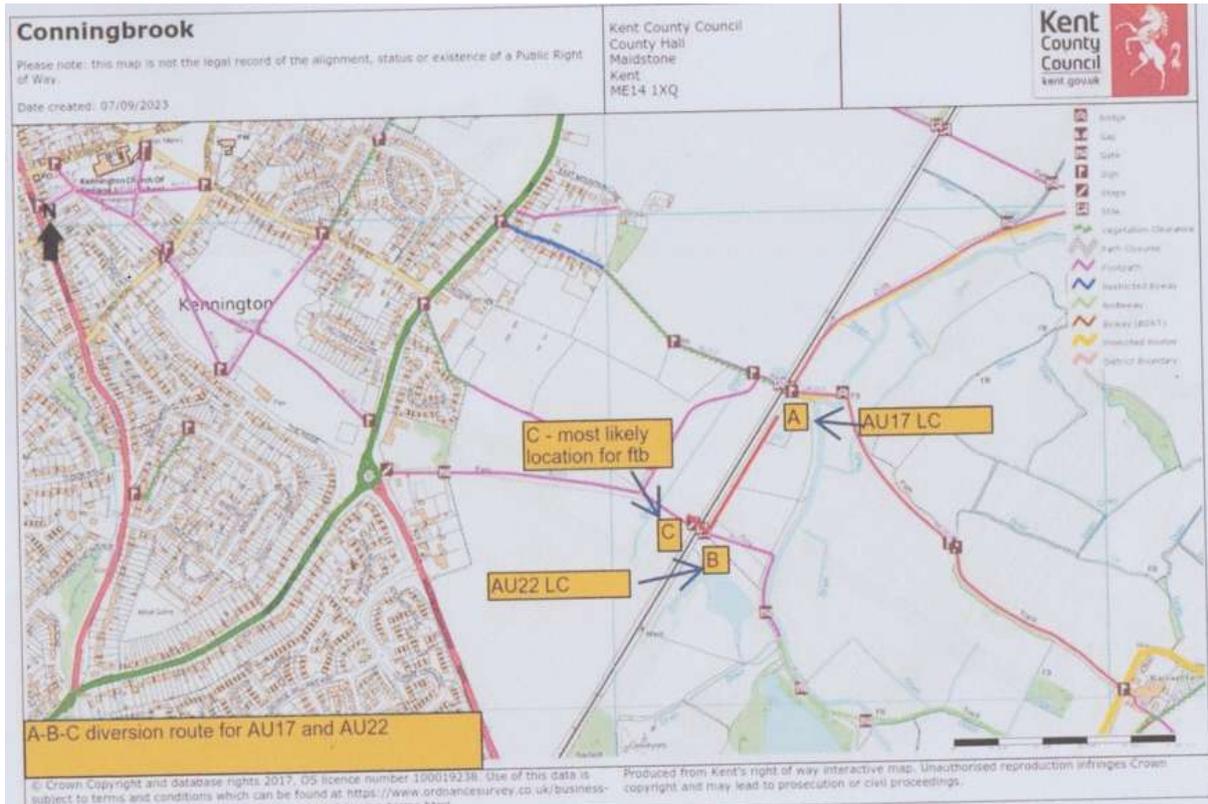
The current arrangements involve the whole the Borough having their recyclables collected one week with non-recyclables collected the next week. The new contract will have a weekly collection of recyclables for half of the Borough with the other half of the Borough having their non-recyclables collected. The following week the collection areas will swap around. This means that there will be recyclables and non-recyclables being collected each week in different part of the Borough. This change is to ensure that if a bin is missed it can be collected in the following week rather than having to wait for a fortnight.

Street cleansing for non-high speed routes (weeds, detritus, leaves and blossom) will be carried out in the same way as currently, graded against the government code of conduct. High speed routes remain the responsibility of KCC or National Highways. 1,200 litter bins will be collected according to the existing timetable, but overflowing bins can be reported for early collection.

The Council will team up with Demelza for any bulky items that can be re-used.

### **ASHFORD / CANTERBURY LINE RAILWAY FOOTBRIDGE**

Network Rail presented to Councillors their plans for a new footbridge in Kennington over the Ashford / Canterbury Line. It was very informative and provided councillors with their understanding of the health and safety issues that they face in dealing with unmanned crossings.



## BOCKHANGER LIBRARY

I attended presentation of the services offered by Bockhanger Library on 11<sup>th</sup> October. Its another good example of “use it or lose it” Council services!



**Welcome to your local library**  
A quick guide to what we offer

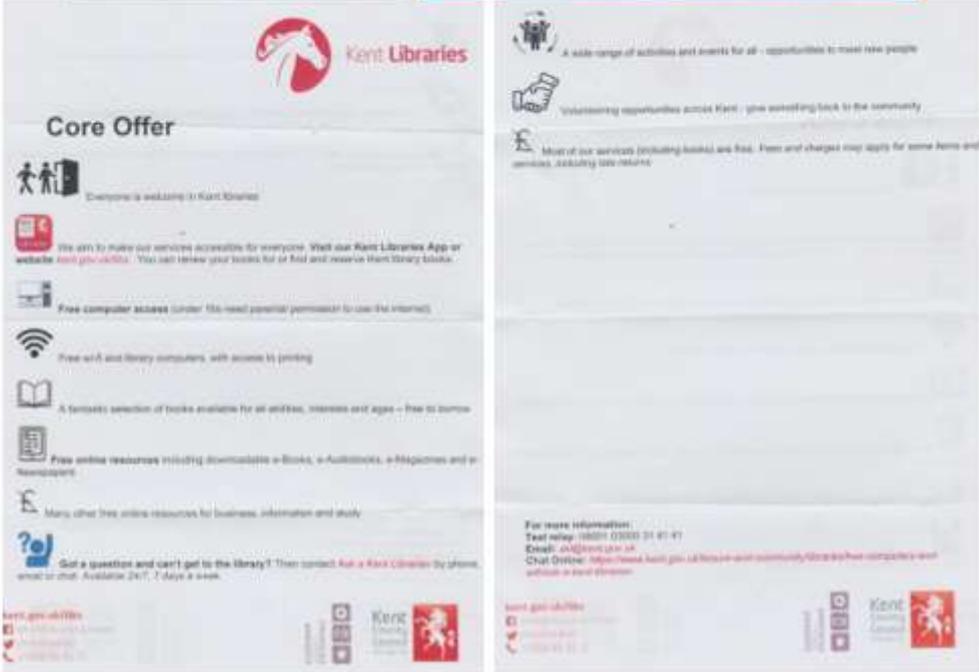
**Bockhanger Library**  
*(in Sure Steps Children's Centre)*  
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Kennington  
Ashford  
Kent  
TN24 9LS  
03000 41 31 31

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## Opening Hours

Monday	1.00pm – 5.00pm
Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	10.00am – 1.00pm
Thursday	Closed
Friday	1.00pm – 5.00pm
Saturday	9.00am – 1.00pm
Sunday	Closed



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Volunteering opportunities across Kent - give something back to the community

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- Free computer access (under 16s need parental permission to use the internet)
- Free wi-fi and library computers, with access to printing
- A fantastic selection of books available for all abilities, interests and ages - free to borrow
- Free online resources including downloadable e-Books, e-Audiobooks, e-Magazines and e-Newspapers
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## COMMUNITY ASSETS

A meeting was held at ABC on 12 October various community projects in the Borough.

**Finberry Community Centre:** Crest are responsible for building and delivering under the s106. The funding available is currently at £3.6m (due to indexation). The broad requirement is a hall, meeting rooms and youth club, nursery, gym, bar or café. There could be tennis courts and a MUGA.

Operations are planned to be with ABC and a maintenance budget is included. The project is diarised for 2024/25 and an initial meeting with the Parish Council will be arranged at the appropriate time.

**Conningbrook Lakes:** I repeated my request for the country park being a place for open water; cold water swimming. We discussed accessing funding through the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health which KCC has recently signed up to. NHS Kent and Medway, Kent County Council and Medway Council, who make up the ICS, have made a public pledge that they have a commitment, and an action plan, to tackle preventable poor mental health which cold water swimming contributes to significantly.

**The MUGA at Rylands Road** is timetabled for delivery Q1 2024/25.

**Bockhanger Hall:** The ABC view of the recent meeting with the Chair and others was given, “Kennington Community Council have been asked to be clear on what they want for the site, including the scope, cost parking and finance via precept or PWLB. ABC cannot make a decision for the Community Council but are happy to be an enabler as it is ABC land. ABC will not bring forward a housing scheme for the time being but is not an expert on accessing financing options (via KALC etc).”

### **HEATHFIELD ROAD LITTER**

I have reported this litter to ABC for collecting as fly tipping (ref 18537824).



### **POTHOLE ESSELLA ROAD / MABLEDON AVENUE**

I have reported this pothole on Essella Road (ref 750998) and asked for an update for work on Mabledon Ave (ref 752993)



### **QUANTOCK VILLAGE GREEN APPLICATION**

The land subject to my Village Green application at Quantock Drive has now been registered as a Village Green (reference VG296).

COMMONS ACT 2006 Form 2

NOTE: This section contains the registration of the land comprised in the register unit

Register of Town and Village Greens

Registration Authority: KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

Register unit No. **VG296**

Edition No. 1

See overleaf for notes

LAND SECTION – Sheet No. 1

No. and date of entry	Description of the land, reference to the register map, registration particulars etc.
1. 20/09/2023	<p>A parcel of land of approximately 0.5 hectares (1.25 acres) in size situated on the northern side of Quantock Drive in the town of Ashford in the Borough of Ashford, as marked with a green verge line inside the boundary on Inset Map 3 of Sheet Number 80 of the Register Map, and distinguished by the number of this Register unit.</p> <p>Registered pursuant to application no. VGA688 made by Mr. P. Bertlett under section 15(2) of the Commons Act 2006. Registration became final on 20/09/2023.</p>

## EUREKA PARK

Councillors had a briefing from the developers on 18<sup>th</sup> October. The development has had concerns from ABC over lack of commercial development and Stodmarsh nutrient neutrality scheme (using the stream through the site to mitigate itself). Discussion had been held over last 2 years with ABC and the developers now believe the scheme is able to progress. The issue taking the hit of the Stodmarsh mitigation is the commercial development (so 375 houses will still be delivered) as the developer do not see the need for commercial development as there is significant nearby vacant commercial. There will be 35,000m<sup>2</sup> of commercial development rather than 20ha as originally envisaged. A planning application is expected at the January 2024 meeting. The plan is for Trinity to sell the freehold to new

homes with covenants in line with proposed government legislation. The identity of the developer has not yet been agreed.

The buffer strip between Sandyhurst Lane and the development has been widened. There will be conditions over the nature of energy use for the homes (probably not to use gas). AE210 footpath creates the opportunity for an east – west green corridor including access. A footpath / cycle route is to be provided through the development to Sandyhurst Lane in addition to what already exists.

The developer has engaged with Kent Police on how to design out crime including provision of downwashing streetlighting, passive surveillance from houses and active spaces with people passing through and having movement through the development. The width of the roads will be signed off by Kent Fire and Rescue as part of the reserved matters.

The development is expected to benefit from the new government requirement for 10% biodiversity gain through various initiatives to support local species including skylark.

Details as to the management including how the management company will operate, charge and liaise with residents are awaited.



## **RAIL TICKET OFFICE CLOSURES**

The Kent Rail Summit was held on 18<sup>th</sup> October and discussed the ticket office closures. There are no ticket office closures consulted on in the Kent area. The only consultation is for the “pay as you go area” stations with less than 50 tickets sold per day. The decision from London Travel Watch will be made in November. The 102 ticket offices in Kent will be consulted on at a later point.

Other items included the proposed improvements to Westenhanger Station.

**Westenhanger station upgrade**

- Otterpool Park LLP working in partnership with NR/ SE to upgrade Westenhanger
- Improvements will help the station meet additional customer demand generated by new Otterpool Park Garden Town with up to 10,000 new homes
- Upgrade project divided into phases - contract for delivery of first phase awarded by SE to Invvu Construction Ltd
- Invvu will provide station improvement options - one design taken forward to next phase
- Otterpool Park LLP also working with DfT to secure HS services at Westenhanger, once the station improvement project has been completed
- Together these will give our customers better journeys



southeastern

## IBF SIGNAGE

The permanent strategic signing for the IBF at Sevington has now finally been agreed between National Highways and the consultants progressing the outstanding IBF works on behalf of HMG. The works to supply and erect the signage is currently out to tender but KCC hope that the works should be awarded and completed within the next 6-8 weeks.

A permanent sign, as shown below, will be erected on the A20 as you approach the Mersham junction from the Smeeth direction. There is a similar new sign to be installed prior to Church Road (westbound at Church turning). Signage will be enhanced on the M20 itself and at junction 10a to better direct HGVs to the IBF and prevent them from erroneously using the A20.



## **A28 DUELLING**

The ABC meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> October discussed progress on the project. I was delighted to hear that the new administration at ABC are supporting existing plans to dual the A28 between the Tank Roundabout and the Matalan Roundabout. KCC have recently commissioned a new traffic survey which shows the scheme is badly needed to reduce congestion and improve travel times. I was worried that the new administration would be less supportive of car-based journeys, but those fears were unfounded. The scheme failed to get off the ground 4 years ago when Local Enterprise Partnership funding (a precursor to "levelling up") was partially available; the trigger point to start works is 400 completions at Chilmington Green so we are now getting close to shovels getting in the ground

## **FLY-TIPPING AT TORRINGTON RD**

I have reported the fly tipping behind Torrington Rd on ABC owned land which is scheduled for council house development (ref 18589408). I spotted the fly tip following a visit to Shedkwick CIC in Torrington Road on 23<sup>rd</sup> October. The group supports people suffering with poor mental health who can find some benefits in attending their group which supports a community garden and related DIY activity. They are riverside so members can fish. The site sits on ABC owned land that used to be allotments near to the Riverside Pub.



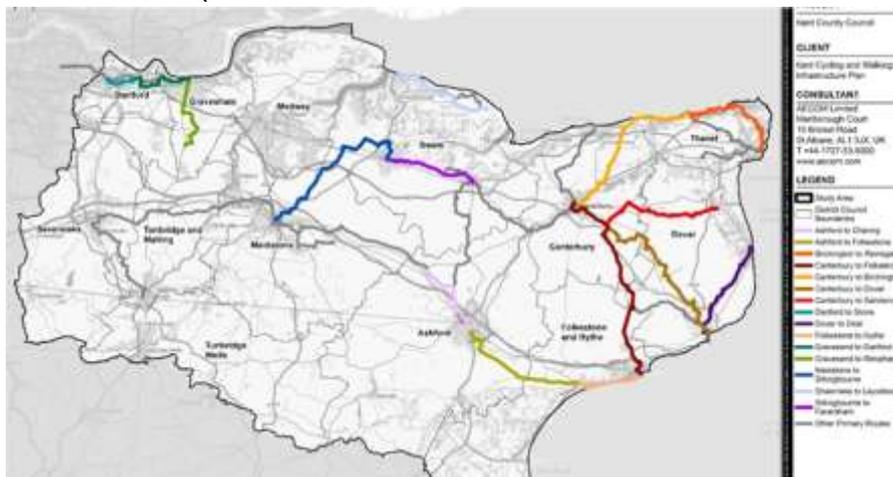
## **MILL COURT PARKING**

The results of my survey of parking are in. Out of 122 properties, 21 households responded (17%). 71% of those responding wanted a parking permit scheme which is not enough response / support to warrant further action. Respondents did point to the following culprits for parking problems. In order they were: commuters, sorting office workers, gym users, Council

workers and town shoppers. It will be difficult to contact and enforce against shoppers and commuters as the road is public highway and needs to be maintained as such. Nevertheless, ABC will reach out to its own staff to remind them not to use Mill Court. Stour Centre users are more problematic as we do not want to alert users who currently pay for parking that nearby on street is available. In the case of the sorting office, I understand the sorting office have secured space in the NCP multi-storey while Eurostar services are not using Ashford. This is in place of the expensive Dover Place car park which some currently use.

## KENT CC WALKING CYCLING STRATEGY

The 15 schemes proposed for consultation are shown below. The public consultation launches on the 1st November and closes on 10th January 2024. We discussed these beforehand at a meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> October. I raised how KCC can access the £300k allocated to ABC during J10A works for cycling / walking infrastructure (the Ashford to Folkestone route is most relevant).



Have your Say!

View the proposed walking and cycling routes and comment using our interactive map!

Visit [www.kent.gov.uk/kcwp](http://www.kent.gov.uk/kcwp)

Consultation closes 10 January 2024



## **ELWICK SQUARE “ZEBRA” CROSSINGS**

I have investigated the pedestrian crossings from the Travelodge / Cinema side of Elwick Road to Bank Street. These crossing points are not by definition zebra crossings, but are courtesy crossings, as with the shared space nobody has official right of way. The crossing is not painted on like a zebra crossing and therefore are not easily or cheaply refreshed.

It is not currently a safety critical defect and therefore KCC are not looking at any further maintenance currently. KCC will need to find a way of refreshing the white blocks at a time when it becomes safety critical.

**Paul Bartlett**  
**Mersham, Sevington South and Finberry Ward, ABC**  
**Ashford Central Division, KCC**  
**Grosvenor Hall Ward, Kennington Community Council**  
**Sevington Ward, Sevington with Finberry Parish Council**  
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