

COUNCIL UPDATE 9.2022

SITTINGBOURNE HWRC

KCC's Waste Transfer Station at Sittingbourne is located on a closed landfill site known as Church Marshes. KCC are responsible for the environmental management and control of this site, to ensure any potentially harmful effects resulting from the legacy do not harm the wider environment. One of the mechanisms KCC employ to do this is a "Leachate Treatment Plant" which helps clean rainwater that has naturally fallen on the site and possibly collected contaminants passing through the body of waste. This is then collected through a network of pipework and pumps before being pushed through the treatment plant where a system of filtration, agitation and passing through a "reed bed" significantly reduces the level of contamination. Over time this reed bed became clogged and unable to perform its cleaning function effectively. Works were completed in August to deliver a complete replacement. These photographs give a feel for the nature and scope of these works which will continue to provide protection for years to come.



HENWOOD

Plans have been approved to create new high quality short-stay accommodation apartments for homeless people on the under-used Henwood car park on the edge of Ashford town centre. This will give people the opportunity to start again. There over 100 people waiting for accommodation in Ashford and this will enable them to move out of B&B accommodation.

This will be the first-of-its-kind modular development in the borough. It will be built on a steel podium, and all necessary safety features and flood risk mitigation measures have been adopted for this scheme due to the site situated in a flood zone area. ABC have teamed up with ZED PODS, an award-winning British modular company, to design and build 23 high-quality, extremely energy efficient, factory-produced modular homes for the site. Full story: <https://orlo.uk/oCO9q>



MULLBERRY HOMES

Further amended plans and information have been submitted by the applicant following comments on the original scheme for the housing at Waterbrook (reserved matters application 21/01595/AS for the development of 400 dwellings, community /café /deli /workspace hub, wetland area, landscaping, open space). These have gone out for full consultation including a more concise description. The amendments are still showing 400 dwellings and nutrient mitigation wetland in the southwest area of the site. The amendments will be assessed by officers and consultees. I have requested a decision on this application is made by the planning committee.

TRANSPORT BOARD

The Transport Board on 6th September were advised on the following works.

- Micro surfacing on Faversham Rd from A28 to Tudor Rd to be programmed.
- Footway resurfacing on Rylands Rd to be designed and programmed.
- Drivers roundabout broken beany kerb work has been started by the contractor.
- Somerset Rd / Forge Lane pedestrian crossing is awaiting a programme date for 2022/23.
- Bybrook Rd 20mph scheme is scheduled for 24 October half term.
- Reopening on Edinburgh Rd car park is dependant on corporate property discussions.
- There are ongoing discussions with Wilko on reopening the upper floors of the Park Mall car park
- A safety audit will be completed on the proposed two new parking spaces on Tannery Lane outside the sorting office.
- Following concerns raised regarding the required working space and unavoidable disruption to the community, it is no longer considered viable to reconstruct Forstal Bridge. A Consultant will be commissioned to design an alternative solution, likely to be a localised repair. Such a solution would only have a limited design life compared to

reconstruction of the bridge and may include traffic management because of the road layout. The area was cleaned up on 6th September.

- A more permanent solution to Op Brook were discussed:
 - Investment into the A2 will (hopefully) be announced in the Road Investment Strategy in 2024
 - The Dover White Cliffs site may be developed to support traffic management (in the same way Sevington IBF does)
 - Continued work with industry to promote international rail freight movements (rather than lorry movements by road)
 - Advances in technology to improve traffic management and border fluidity; this will include ensuring efficient planned implementation of the EU's Entry/Exit Scheme (EES) in 2023
- KCC met National Highways on Friday 9th September to discuss littering on the A2070 and signage on the A2070/M20. The signs on M20 for SIBF are 'in hand'. HE are carrying out topographical surveys and then the signs can be ordered. Included in the package is a sign on A2070 prior to Church Road, and one prior to The Street Mersham on the A20.

IBF/HIGH FIELD

The environment team advise that a very broad count of the number of shrubs, scrub, trees, and plants within hedgerows that the eastern field will incorporate, is somewhere in the region of 10,000. This is all part of the wider environmental work, including adding a substantial amount of plants on top of the wildflower meadows, which will help deliver a Biodiversity Net Gain of over 70%. If achieved this will be an important contribution to the flourishing local wildlife.

EAT WELL – SPEND LESS

I attended the third "Eat well – Spend less" roadshow organised by ABC at Park Mall on 7th September. This was the third event following ones at Stanhope and at Repton Connect. There were stalls including One You Services offering free health check; ABC welfare intervention, refugee resettlement and housing option; Ashford together, transforming, connecting and revitalising communities and bringing people together; SEK – Connect Well Community Navigators; KCC Adult Social Care & Health, offering advice on social care and public health; KCC Ashford Children's Centre – sharing their offer and services; Vaccination Ambassadors from NHS Kent & Medway Covid and Flu Team; Digital Inclusion & Capability funded by KCC Helping Hands. Further events will be held in the borough, with one pencilled in for Park Mall on 7th December.

BELMONT ROAD LIBRARY

Following a request by Chris Morley given feedback from the Bockhanger Square events in August, I have asked for new signage on Belmont Road /

Bybrook Road. A pedestrian sign rather than a traffic sign would be more appropriate and to reduce sign clutter, I have asked that KCC take down the existing sign for the Children's centre and combining into one sign (double sided) as below.



PLANNING

Application 19/01004/AS is for retrospective change of use of land at Chequer Tree Paddock, Colliers Hill to a private gypsy and traveller caravan site consisting of a single pitch containing 1 mobile home, 1 dayroom and 1 touring caravan. The Planning Inspectorate has now confirmed that the appeal against ABC's refusal is being dealt with by way of an informal hearing on 15 November 2022. The hearing will be held as an in-person event at the Civic Centre with the facility to participate virtually. Anyone wishing to take part in the Hearing must make that interest known to the Planning Appeals Team as soon as possible prior to the Hearing either by email planningappeals@ashford.gov.uk or telephone (01233) 330264.

TOWN CENTRE SEATING

Last month parts of Ashford Town Centre started to look different as new seating, furnishings and bunting decorated upper Bank Street and Middle Row. This temporary pilot scheme delivered some interventions that links to key themes from the Town Centre Reset - integrated play, temporary public realm and outdoor seating. If successful this could lead to further, more permanent features in the future. This short-term regeneration project aims to encourage active and healthy lifestyles by introducing informal play opportunities, attractive places to meet and dwell and enhancing of public spaces. It provides a new look and feel to areas of the town centre, with additional cleaning, re-decoration and new planting, bunting and seating adding a touch of colour.

It is important to gain feedback from residents, visitors, shoppers and businesses on these ideas. ABC are therefore now introducing interactive signage around these locations in conjunction with a company called Hello Lamp Post, to capture feedback and explain more about what they are doing via QR codes and text messaging. Passers-by can either text the number displayed on the sign or scan the QR code to receive information on the object. For more information please visit <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/hello-ashford>

TELECOMMUNICATION TOWERS

To enable the swifter rollout of 5G sites, new planning rules apply.

- Existing masts outside conservation areas can be increased to 25m without approval (existing masts in a conservation area can be increased to 20m without approval). Prior approval of permitted development is required to go above these heights.
- New masts outside conservation areas can be built up to 30m with approval as to the proposed siting and appearance (new masts up to 25m within conservation areas require prior approval of the proposed siting and appearance).
- New masts higher than 30m (25m in a conservation area) require full planning consent.

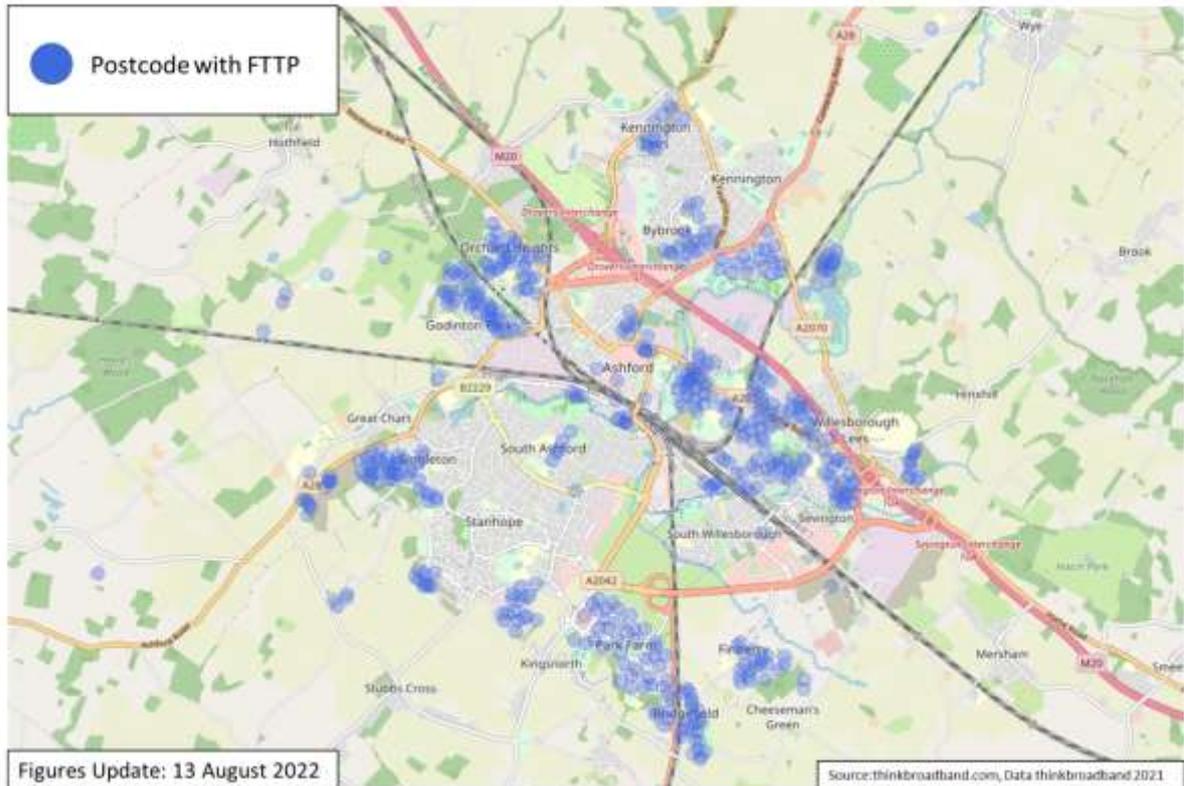
The planning authority has 56 days to respond to an application. A new “Code of Conduct” has been introduced requiring developers to minimise the impact on the environment and appropriate engagement with local communities.

BROADBAND ROLLOUT

The ABC Cabinet Committee met on 29th September and had an update on improved digital infrastructure.

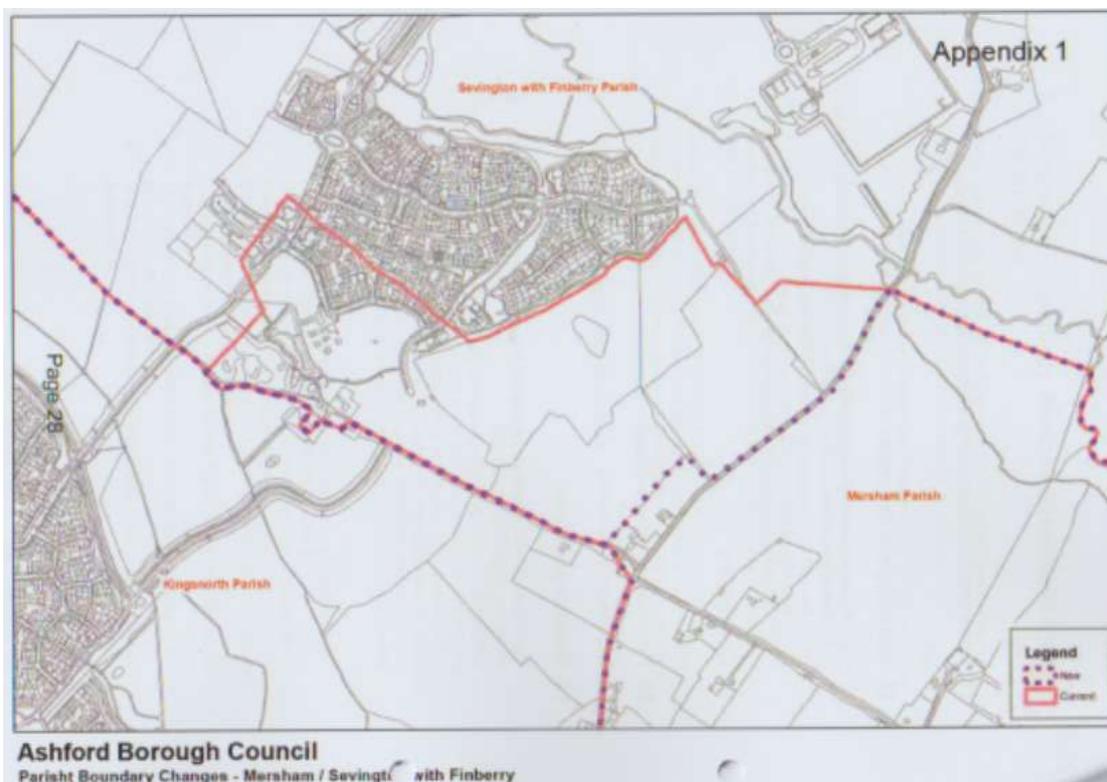
Virgin Media O2 (VMO2) are developing a three-year plan to upgrade their current infrastructure across their UK network and they should be able to give more detail by the end of 2022. As of July 2022, 900 homes in the Ashford Urban Area were upgraded, and there is potential for 5,000 further premises to be upgraded in the coming months. It's important to note that VMO2 are upgrading their infrastructure to gigabit speeds but these won't go live until the majority of the UK network is upgraded. The whole network should be upgraded to fibre by 2028, covering 15 million premises across the UK.

Openreach and Netomnia have been progressing their Fibre To The Premises (FTTP) rollout across the Ashford Urban Area. This includes approx. 35,000 premises, with Netomnia rolling out to an additional 20,000 premises, including businesses. As of June 2022, Openreach have commissioned 9,000 premises and Netomnia have commissioned 2,850 premises that are able to order FTTP from the Ashford exchange. In Q4 2022, 2,000 further premises are expected to be commissioned by Openreach, with Netomnia expected to commission 3,500 premises. Openreach has also announced that in Biddenden, High Halden, Hamstreet, Sevington, Wye, Chilham, and Charing exchanges are due to be upgraded to FTTP however this is not scheduled to begin until after 2023 with their website quoting a deadline of December 2026.



PARISH BOUNDARY

The Council's Selection and Constitutional Committee has agreed to make a recommendation to Full Council to change Sevington / Mersham boundary as follows. The purpose is to bring Finberry into a single parish (Sevington) rather than have it split across Mersham and Sevington.



AYLESBURY ROAD

Following incidents at Aylesbury Road with HGVs, the last resulting in three cars being badly damaged with a narrow miss to a house, I have raised the matter with KCC. A no through road symbol was added to the Road Name sign about 6 years ago but residents see that this as inadequate because in the dark it is difficult to see. I have asked for a large no through road sign erected at Aylesbury Road entrance.

QUANTOCK ROAD VILLAGE GREEN

The following notice has been issued requiring objections to my application to register the land as a village green by 18th November.

IN THE BOROUGH OF ASHFORD
KENT COUNTY COUNCIL
COMMONS ACT 2006 – SECTION 15(1)
NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR THE REGISTRATION OF LAND
AS A TOWN OR VILLAGE GREEN

Application has been made to the Registration Authority, Kent County Council, by Mr. P. Bartlett under section 15(1) of the Commons Act 2006 and in accordance with the Commons Registration (England) Regulations 2014. The application seeks the inclusion in the register of Town and Village Greens of the land described below which is claimed to have qualified for registration as a Town or Village Green by virtue of the use of the land for the purposes of lawful sports and pastimes 'as of right' and without challenge by the landowner for a period of over twenty years. If the Registration Authority is satisfied that the land described below qualifies for registration as a Town or Village Green, it will so register the land.

Copies of the relevant documents may be obtained on request by contacting the Commons Registration Team by email at commons.villagegreens@kent.gov.uk or by telephone (via the contact centre) on 03300 417171.

Any person wishing to make representations regarding the application should send a written statement of the facts upon which the representation is based to the Commons Registration Team, preferably by email to commons.villagegreens@kent.gov.uk, or alternatively by post to the address below, so as to arrive no later than Friday 18th November 2022. Please quote reference VGA888.

Representations must include the name and postal address of the person making them and the nature of their interest (if any) in the land affected by the application. They must also be signed by the person making them and state the grounds on which they are made.

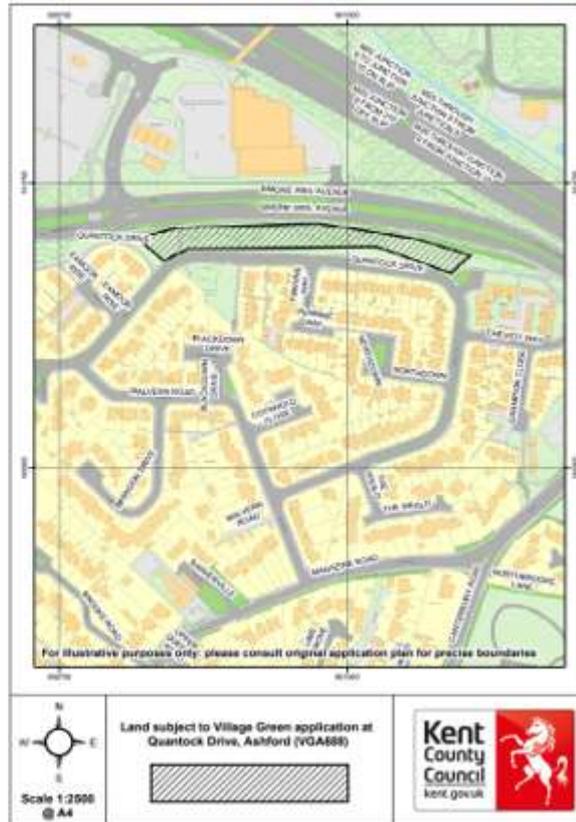
Please note that any representations that are to be taken into account by the Registration Authority in reaching a decision on the application cannot be treated as confidential and may come into the public domain during the processing of the application. Copies of any objections or representations received will be forwarded to the applicant for comment and may be disclosed to other interested parties, including the Planning Inspectorate where the case is referred to it for determination.

Description of the land claimed to have qualified for registration as a Town or Village Green

A strip of land of approximately 1.25 acres (0.5 hectares) in size situated between the northern side of Quantock Drive and the southern side of Simone Weil Avenue at Ashford.

Commons Registration Team
 PROW and Access Service
 Kent County Council
 Service House
 County Hall
 Maidstone ME14 1XX

Date: Friday 30th September 2022



SOLAR FARM – ALDINGTON / MERSHAM

A village meeting was held in Aldington Village Hall on 26th September. Residents are concerned about the impact on the entrance to Aldington village from the A20 (part of the solar farm is in Mersham Parish). Residents are to be made aware of the planning portal and that they had the opportunity to support or oppose the development. This is so there was no “regret” if the application were granted. Residents must not pass on the opportunity to comment. A smaller group will do the legwork to raise awareness of the development in the village. Generally solar is supported where it is not on the best and most versatile agricultural land. I spoke to Damian on 27th September as the larger part of the development will be dealt with by the Planning Inspectorate.

STATION UNDERPASS

A great improvement to the lighting has been delivered by the team at ABC



BYBROOK WARD POLLING PLACE

I have asked electoral officers to investigate using the Bockhanger library for polling for that ward as the library is normally closed on Thursdays so elections should interfere with normal library usage. This would be nearer than St Mary's Community Hall for some residents in the ward.

ORCHARD HEIGHTS ROUNDABOUT

The pedestrian crossing signs I asked to be provided have now been installed by KCC.



HM THE QUEEN

Normal business at the County Council on 15th September was suspended to allow members to speak about their recollections of the Queen. The following is my statement.

It is an honour to have this opportunity to offer my condolences and those of my family and constituents to His Majesty the King and the royal family, and to pay tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Over the years The Queen, Prince Philip and other members of the royal family have made regular private visits to Mersham near Ashford, then home of Countess Mountbatten of Burma. The Queen would attend Sunday Services at the local Church either in Mersham or Smeeth. When visiting the village in December before Christmas The Queen was known to come out and listen to carol singing. Older residents report seeing her walk from New House to Woods stores with her scarf on, with her Corgis and policemen on station in The Street. For those who know the village, Her Majesty always had the corner bedroom in New House so she could see the Turkey Oaks in the field next to the Old Rectory, and very majestic the Turkey Oaks still are.

During those private visits Prince Philip's enthusiasm for sport often took him to the cricket pitch in Mersham-le-Hatch leaving the Princess – later Queen - watching the game surrounded by local people. In one match, playing for Mersham-Le-Hatch against Aldington, Prince Philip took 3-27 but revenge was taken when he was bowled out for a duck! (By all accounts he was a rotten batsman)

Other visits included attending shooting in the Mersham Hatch estate. Outside private visits, The Queen's visits to Ashford included the former Templar Barracks at Repton Park and St Mary's Parish Church in the town centre.

It was easy to be intimidated by what she was, but never by who she was. With the authority, there was always great warmth. She is now at peace with her beloved husband, Prince Philip. God save the King.



Paul Bartlett
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Sevington South Ward, Sevington with Finberry Parish Council
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