

## COUNCIL UPDATE 4.2022

### **AE404**

A knocked-down footpath sign to footpath AE404 and fly tipping of tyres in Ashford Road, Mersham were reported to KCC and ABC respectively (ref 708871) / (ref 16831006). ABC attended promptly to remove the tyres.



### **CHURCH ROAD (EAST)**

Two signs on Church Rd, Sevington / A2070 (ref 708875) have been damaged by errant HGVs. The cycling / footpath sign was dealt with quickly by KCC (the other is National Highways so will take longer...)



### **FLYTIPPING CHEESEMAS GREEN LANE**

4 black sacks on Cheesemans Green Lane (ref 16845133) and a blue duvet full of household rubbish (ref 16888356) were reported to ABC.



### **DROPPED MANHOLE COVER (BRAMBLING AVE)**

I reported this direct to Crest who have repaired.



### **FOOTPATH WATERBROOK TO FINBERRY**

Reinstatement of the temporary diversion of the footpath to Finberry / Waterbrook avoiding waterlogged ground was requested to FM Conway. This is their responsibility because the footpath was signposted as a diversion during the A2070 traffic light work.



### **LOWER HIGH STREET**

Dangerous stump of metal bollard Lower High Street reported to KCC (ref 709490)



**MABLEDON AVE**

Pothole Mabledon Ave / Essella Road (ref 709491) reported to KCC



**GILL LANE**

Flytipping at Gill Lane was reported and quickly removed by ABC (ref 16777684)



## **OAKLANDS**

The surface at Oaklands car park reported for repair.



## **BOWER ROAD**

The new sign at shop end of Bower Road was incorrectly located. KCC have removed the sign and plan to relocate to just before the telephone box.



## **BOCKHANGER LANE**

Potholes and broken solar light on Bockhanger Lane have been reported (pothole ref 710553)



## **FINBERRY STREETLIGHTS**

5 Street lights on Avocet (near No 45 and opposite No 45, near No 51, near the letterbox and the dentist) & two on Nuthatch (Ref MNCK004 & 5). KCC have not yet adopted so they (KCC) have reported to Crest.

## **FORSTAL BRIDGE**

Has been tidied up by KCC.



## **VICTORIA PARK**

The Lottery Heritage Fund grant manager have agreed that ABC can use some of the Sensory Garden contingency fund to install a new pond liner nearby. This will avoid what would have become a bit of an eyesore in the new space.



## **SEVINGTON WITH FINBERRY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

Here are the key points from my report to the meeting on 3 April:

- Following concerns over delays to the traffic light work on the A2070, I have spoken to the Church Commissioners of England (CCE) as key stakeholder who advise that National Highways (NH) allowed regular suspension of the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) on advice from the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) to facilitate Operation Brock. This meant the lack of usual penalties for the contractor, FM Conway. A snagging process will be undertaken and I asked for reports on issues such as sightlines on the exit from Finberry and planting issues.
- The last major impediment for consent to be granted for work to start on the new Aldi in Waterbrook has been lifted. This was agreement between the British Horse Society, CCE, KCC on the bridleway diversion. One condition will be for the CCE to bring forward a local store on Finberry.
- The B-line extension to Finberry from Bridgefield is dependent on enforcement that private cars do not use the bus only link road. This can be brought forward once enforcement on the existing 3 bus gates in Ashford is shown that they can successfully operate. In the meantime, I have asked Stagecoach to consider an extension to the G line once the traffic lights are operating.
- I have asked the Lorry Park management to install a variable message sign on the slip road to Waterbrook from the A2070. The sign will show

when the lorry park is full so will avoid queuing of lorries on Waterbrook Ave and Arrowhead Road.

- Mullberry Homes, the developers of the 400-home development in Waterbrook at the end of Brambling Ave have increased the amount of green spaces on the development. There are however still concerns over the ecological mitigating relating to the relocation of reptiles from the Amazon site. There are reports that the Amazon development will not now come forward.
- Progress is hoped for on the community centre and HML supervisory committee with Crest during 2023/24. Sevington Church improvements financed by the DfT are hoped to start in the near future.

### **TRADE OPERATING MODEL (“TOM”)**

The Government have announced how the trade operating agreement will affect Sevington IBF. Checks on products of animal origin, foodstuffs, plant and seeds will be carried out at Sevington IBF by DEFRA and ABC.

Operations are not expected to be 24 hours and will likely operate 7am to 10pm. Operations at Bastion Point (in Dover) will be plant and seeds by DEFRA with foodstuffs and products of animal origin being carried out at Sevington.

Initially these checks will on-line only on medium and high-risk goods only with physical checks starting in January 2024. Checks on live animal imports will start later in 2024.

These changes will require some reconfiguration of the operating buildings at Sevington (which runs contrary to what we were told at the Footpath public inquiry when DfT stated that no further construction work was required).

Ports will be required to apply full customs controls to goods moving to Great Britain. This means that goods must have a valid declaration and be customs cleared to be able to proceed to their destination. Goods may be held at the port, or directed to an Inland Border Facility (such as Sevington) for documentary or physical checks if these checks cannot be done at the border. Most traders will have to make declarations and pay relevant tariffs at the point of import.

It is hoped that now operations are settled this will enable the DfT to restart stakeholder meetings with residents to cover:

- Ongoing planting issues
- Unnecessary lighting (now operating hours are settled)
- Nesting gulls who scavenge for litter on site creating early morning racket

- Signage on M20 to prevent lorries trying to access the site by unauthorised routes
- Ambient noise from lorries and operatives.

Details are at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-border-target-operating-model-draft-for-feedback>

The TOM is subject to public consultation at a meeting to be held on 17<sup>th</sup> May which I plan to attend.

## STREETS SAFE



Ashford Streetwise is an innovative, new Smartphone App which identifies the areas and routes in and around the town centre with the best safety provision, such as monitored CCTV, good street lighting, high footfall, Safe Spaces and high presence of guardians. The app also offers safety features such as SOS, alerts and defibrillator and emergency trauma pack locations. Download the app for free via your Apple or Android app store. Report areas of Ashford that you do not feel safe to Kent Police on 101 or <https://www.kent.police.uk/ro/report/>

British Transport Police has produced a new app to help rail users stay safe on the rail network. The free Railway Guardian app is an all-in-one safety app, available to download on both Android and Apple. The app has a number of facilities for rail travellers:

- Methods to report crimes or concerns to BTP
- Share your journey with trusted contacts. Share your live location, get them to help, or let them
- know you've arrived safely
- Read guides on safety
- Get support from charities around England, Scotland and Wales
- Report street safety issues to StreetSafe

The app can be downloaded at <https://www.btp.police.uk/police-forces/british-transport-police/areas/campaigns/Download-Railway-Guardian>

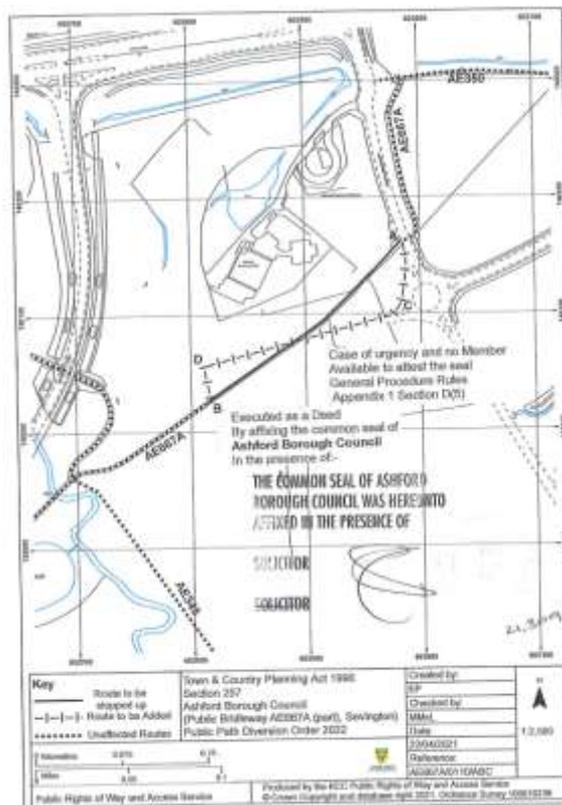
## TYRE STORAGE

There is a large store of tyres to the rear of Grosvenor Hall in Kennington. It is in a store accessible from Bockhanger Lane. The tyres were formally part of the Hall's Nightline activity and they have confirmed they will be removing the tyres and repurposing them around the centre over the next few weeks.



## PROW AE667A

Public Bridleway AE667A at Waterbrook has been diverted to allow the development of the new Aldi store.



## **REPTON CONNECT: ART BOX LAUNCH**

I attended the Art Box launch at Repton Connect on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> April. The new space will be used for a wide range of small capacity projects. It will be available for the community to hire.



## **INTEGRATED CARE PARTNERSHIP**

I attended a development session for the ICP on 14<sup>th</sup> April in Maidstone. A focus was on ensuring the people of Kent and Medway adopt positive health behaviours including diet, emotional and mental health support, participation in physical activity, minimise alcohol, substance and tobacco use. Preventing diabetes is identified as a priority.

It was agreed to ensure that targeted improved access to proactive reviews and screening, including dental checks, supported by patient-focused support services that understand barriers and behaviours that prevent people from engaging in wellbeing and long term health.

The NHS Digital Weight Management Programme supports adults living with obesity who also have a diagnosis of diabetes, hypertension or both, to manage their weight and improve their health.

It is a 12-week online behavioural and lifestyle programme that people can access via a smartphone or computer with internet access that can be accessed at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/digital-weight-management/>

## **MERSHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

Here are the key points from my report to Mersham Annual Parish meeting held on 17 April:

- Contractors for the work on Church Hill have promised to be in contact with residents and businesses, including the Farriers Arms, to manage the road closures during the summer holiday period. 6 weeks is allowed for road closures, but it is hoped less will be needed.
- The new operating plan for the IBF has been published for comments. Foodstuffs, products of animal origins, plants and seeds are to be checked in the largely unused buildings at the centre of the site. The checks will be carried out by DEFRA and ABC. Operations will not be 24 hours and will operate between 7am and 10pm. It is hoped that ABC will be able to demonstrate that 24-hour works is not needed and that HMRC will follow suit. Checks will start as electronic with physical checks starting in January 2024. Animal imports will start later in 2024. This follows reports of African Swine Fever in the EU which the UK wishes to be protected from. Now activities are settled there should be no further delays on the M20 signage being put up which should end the issue of errant lorries.
- The change in operations will require reconfiguration of buildings on site which is contrary to what we were told at the footpath public enquiry. The lack of construction work on site was a reason given for the closure of the footpath. The need for a barrister supporting residents' objections has become apparent and this lesson needs to be learnt for the Stonestreet Solar planning hearing which could be during 2023 or 2024.
- The Church Commissioners for England have taken the proposed link road towards Conscience Farm out of draft plans for 400 new homes on Waterbrook. I doubt this is the last we have heard from them on plans to build new homes at Conscience Farm. The plans we saw in 1988 may be back on the agenda during the next local plan iteration (they are still on ABC planning portal).

## **ASB AND BUS SHELTERS**

Clear Channel (ABC contractors who manage bus shelters in return for the advertising rights) advise at a meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> April that damage from catapults, graffiti and ball-bearing guns can be reported to their free 24-hour damage hotline. The number is 0800 731 3699 or <https://www.clearchannel.co.uk/contact>. This will ensure the report is prioritised and appropriately escalated to the 24 hours on call team.

## SK8SIDE



I attended the Sk8side awards at the Elwick Club on 25<sup>th</sup> April to hear about the work they have been doing with youth in the borough since 2019. Three issues were drawn to my attention.

- Planning has been delayed for the delivery of the new skateboard park in Tenterden.
- There have been delays to the new pump track at Victoria Park.
- Air quality improvement funding is available from DfT and could be applied to walking / cycling schemes around J10 / J10A.

## EAT WELL, SPEND LESS ROADSHOW

The latest Eat Well, Spend Less roadshow visited Bockhanger square on 25<sup>th</sup> April. The event saw the first outing of the new Community Health Bus from the Kent Community Healthcare Foundation Trust and KCC Public Health.



## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG)

I attended a community event run by Kent Police in the Civic Centre on 26<sup>th</sup> April, during national stalking week. The purpose was to understand what further actions Kent Police and the Borough Council's Community Safety Unit

could take to reduce VAWG. It was chaired by DCI Emma Banks, Kent Police lead for Protecting Vulnerable People. The key issues were:

- Confidence in policing.
- How can the police improve services to women and girls?
- Are there barriers in communication between the police and public?

The new proposed Neighbourhood Policing Review was explained. It arose from the need for financial savings without reducing officer numbers. The Community Focused model starts on 7 June and will be achieved by Sept 2024. "Beat Teams" (high visibility policing) will be allocated to each wards. There will be 15-minute hot spot patrols. Named officers can be identified per postcode. There will be 20 sergeants and 110 officers across Kent. Neighbourhood task groups will be set up for each district. In Ashford the task group will work with ABC's CSU. This will enable information reported to the CSU to be acted on by the police. A Child Centred Police Team will be created.

My Community Voice is vital to distributing information to residents so signing up is important.

## **LAND MAPPING COMMISSION**

The Independent Land Mapping Commission recommendations to ABC were adopted at the final full Council meeting before the elections on Thursday 25th April.

The Commission's key recommendation is to establish a process including mapping and funding to deliver **Ashford Space for Nature Plan**. These may include public access and will include:

- green open spaces such as parks and village greens
- wildlife reserves providing species rich habitats
- nature based engineered wetlands to maintain and improve river catchments (although it was noted that phosphate and nitrate eutrophication should be addressed by improved water treatment)

None should be Grade 1,2 or 3a agricultural land as these need to be prioritised for food production.

The mapping requirement will identify buffer zones (not rigid "green belt"), spaces for community orchards, current and future tree belts that can screen developments, habitats and wildlife corridors, all of which need to be connected.

The principles behind the recommendation include:

- SUDS should be retrofitted in urban areas, where practical

- Small scale housing development in most villages is required with a greater proportion than the current maximum of 40% being non-market housing for rent
- More trees are to be planted
- Solar panels or roof tiles should be mandatory on all new buildings, ground based solar should not involve significant or cumulative loss of countryside
- Ashford town centre needs special attention in terms of “tidiness” and looking “loved”
- The PROW network to be upgraded to provide a useable network for walking, cycling and horse riding, but not usage for any motor vehicles, removing the abuse of our PROWs by off-roaders
- Ensure power cables, transformers and all the necessary electrical distribution apparatus is delivered ahead of development
- Broadband needs to be sorted out with a good mobile signal everywhere

**Paul Bartlett**

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