



Coffee Morning

You are invited to drop in to our Open Morning at the "White Lion" on Saturday 10 Oct between 10am and noon. There will be an opportunity to discuss Ashford's preferred sites for the 475 houses allocated for Tenterden as part of the local plan.

Please come and share your views on these and any other issues with committee members over a complimentary cup of coffee. New residents and non-members are most welcome.

New Homes – Preferred Sites

Ashford's officers have now shown their hand about their preferred sites for allocated housing to be completed by 2021. The latest consultation document for the town's future development proposes 455 homes in two phases on land to the south of the town between the Leisure Centre and Smallhythe Road. Land north of Westwell Court would take a further 20.

Access to the southern development would be from Recreation Ground Road and Smallhythe Road. Woodland and ponds are to be retained and green space provided between the two phases. Public car parking for up to 200 vehicles is to be included, but there are no specific plans for additional employment, health care and schooling.

Our comments submitted as part of the consultation are in summary:

- We question the extent and pace of the proposed development, in the light of the most recent housing figure requirements, produced in the South East Regional Spatial Strategy Policy.
- We support the selection of the southern area in principle, since it encourages easy access to the town centre on foot as an alternative to using cars.

- We reject the proposed Westwell site as the numbers are too small to justify such a development that would erode the setting and character of the town.
- A Masterplan for the proposed southern development should be prepared in consultation with the community. This should include enforceable and binding guidelines for developers.
- There will be significant additional traffic in Recreation Ground Road. Provision of long term car parking on two separate sites serving the east and west approaches would help reduce this and ease pressure on the High Street.
- We consider that there is a need for Ashford borough council to take a more positive approach to promote local employment to help reduce long distance commuting and create a stronger community.

Car Park Figures Figured?

The public disclosure at the Town Meeting that income from the Tenterden car parks generated more than £600,000 for the year 2007-8 left the audience flabbergasted and prompted us to seek written answers from Ashford Borough Council on the current position. Responses from Paul Jackson, Head of Environmental Services, ABC, to some of our key questions are as follows:

What is the current income?

£411,524 was generated from Tenterden's car parks in the last financial year. The overwhelming part of this was from parking fees and season tickets. Less than 8% was for fines. After operating costs there was a net income of £197,959.

How much do the attendants cost?

ABC does not distinguish the costs of parking attendants from "back office" staff who undertake administration, including processing fines and considering appeals.

How much is spent on maintenance?

Figures for general car park maintenance are not immediately available and in any

case would not be typical because of an expenditure moratorium imposed by ABC during the year. The cost of operating and maintaining the 13 ticket machines last year was £23, 657.

What proportion of warden hours is dedicated to Tenterden?

There are 8 parking attendants for Ashford in total. Allowing for days off, there are usually 6 parking attendants on any one day. Two of these are normally deployed to Tenterden, where they work shifts between 7am and 10pm. In addition there are visits by late turn patrols (2pm-10pm), mainly to enforce on-street regulations where there are parking problems and where their efforts will be most effective.

"There is no question of Tenterden subsidising Ashford", says Mr Jackson, and statements in the press that Ashford Borough Council car parks run or have run in the past at a loss is incorrect.

And the good news...

"It is anticipated that maintenance markings in car parks will be carried out and completed by autumn this year "

Members will remember that an impeccable source told us that maintenance would be undertaken "soon"- that was a year ago! We shall continue to monitor progress.

Town Hall Forecourt Gets " Go Ahead"

There is overwhelming public support for proposed improvements for Tenterden's High Street. Analysis of almost 150 written comments from about 300 residents who attended the Tenterden Improved Exhibition in the Town hall in July revealed strong endorsement for the three proposals on display. Over 90% were in favour of a forecourt in front of the Town Hall. General comments included "a vast improvement", "wanting to be done for a long time". The large majority of these (over 80%) preferred the full-blown scheme. Most commented on the visual appeal and improved setting for the Town Hall and the Woolpack that would result by removing the parking bays outside the Town Hall, even though there would be some overall loss of parking.

The scheme for pedestrian finger posts was also well received and there were

helpful comments on what should be included in the detailed signage. Several people commented on the need to remove redundant posts and for a "coat of paint" especially of some of the lampposts.

Many regarded the proposed replacement of the railings at East Cross, at the junction of Recreation Ground Road and the High Street, as "a much needed solution to a long standing problem ". The improved design and character was seen to be more in sympathy with the heritage of the Town at a major approach to the town centre, compared with the current railings.

The outcome of the public consultations were presented to the Kent Council and Ashford Council's Joint Transportation Board at the beginning of September and schemes were approved in principle, subject to detailed costs for maintenance.

A Summer Crime Blip

Tom Newbury, our beat officer, reports that the figures for crime in the Town and surrounding area for July and August showed a blip. This is partly seasonal and broadly consistent with other years.

There were 8 cases of shop lifting, mainly from the larger stores. Internal CCTV has helped apprehend the culprits. Four local people have been arrested for criminal damage after a series of incidents. Four assaults resulted in two arrests and there were two arrests for car theft; one motorcycle was recovered. Theft of pedal cycles has increased. There has been a spate of burglaries, five in all, from large detached properties in the rural areas.

Residents can raise general concerns and seek advice through the quarterly PACT (Partners and Community Together) open meetings held in the Zion Baptist Church. Contact Julie Gipson White, Police Community Support Officer, at the Police Office or on her mobile phone 0777 2226205.

Forthcoming Events

The Folk Festival Fri-Sun 2nd-4th October
Scouts Bonfire Sat Nov 7th at 6.30pm
Christmas Lights and Late Night Shopping Friday 4th December
Christmas Shopping Events, including Carols and Salvation Army, Saturday 19th December