



TDRA

Registered Charity No 1121579

www.TDRA.org.uk

16 September 2017

Town Clerk
Tenterden Town Council
Town Hall
High St
Tenterden

Dear Phil,

Tenterden Regeneration Consultation – Comments on Final Report

I am writing on behalf of the Tenterden and District Residents Association (TDRA) to comment on the final report of the Regeneration Consultation submitted by Lipton Group.

1. Surprisingly, the soft copy of the report fails to mention the authors (Lipton Group) or the date of the report
2. There is an absence of numerical data from the surveys which we consider undermines the level of confidence in the conclusions. It is therefore unclear what the true level of support is for any proposal. Additionally, it is not made explicitly clear whether the “1000 individuals” quoted includes participants being counted more than once at the various separate consultations.
3. The report muddles the priorities for spending the £3.5 million funds available from TTC by including significant projects likely to be funded separately (e.g. Leisure Centre) and fails to clearly set out the amount of funding envisaged from TTC and that from other sources.
4. What is meant by the heading “Max Value” in the various tables of costs and potential funding? Is this intended to indicate the expected funding from TTC or from the named “Funder”?
5. The question that needs answering for each proposal, even at this preliminary stage, is how much funding is anticipated for each proposal from the available TTC funds and what is the preliminary estimate of the total TTC funds for the recommended projects.
6. Having made the above comments about the overall content of the report TDRA Committee broadly support the findings of the report although we continue to support the concept of development of a cinema in the town.

With respect to the individual proposals, we have comments as follows:

1. The development of the Town Hall as a community hub has widespread support. However, many of the proposed facilities envisaged to be provided at the community hub are already provided at the Gateway which has funding and staff support from KCC (library), ABC (attendance by ABC officers at various times) and also provides the town’s post office. The enlarged space at a new community hub in the Town Hall will be welcomed but the knock-on impacts for example on the post office facility will need to be considered.

2. The staffing of the proposed community hub will need careful consideration as the descriptions given at the consultations appear to ignore the additional staffing that was implied. Pressure from central government on local authority budgets has generally led to reduced staffing at local authorities and in particular at libraries. The authors need to be careful not to promise what cannot be delivered in staffing of the community hub. The Tent1 funds should not be used for ongoing staff costs.
3. The extent of funding required for the Community Hub, some £1.0 – 2.0 million could use the majority of the funds which have accrued to TTC from Tent1 land sale.
4. A substantial part of the cost of the community hub proposal would relate to overdue essential maintenance to the Town Hall structure which should rightly already have been provided for in TTC's financial planning and thus be met by the council tax payers from reserves accrued for this purpose or met from an increase in the precept. This essential maintenance work should not rely on the "windfall" from the Tent1 land sale.
5. At the Recreation Ground it is our view that the chief obstacle to greater use of the tennis courts is the absence of floodlighting. Floodlit courts in Bethersden are in regular use on many evenings. The absence of floodlights excludes almost all young people and the working population, many of whom only have time available in the evenings. As it stands, only the older generation can make use of tennis courts for much of the year as this is the only group with spare time during daylight hours. Floodlights should have a higher priority than a third court.
6. A skate park has been talked about for many years and would be an excellent addition to facilities aimed at the young. The existing use of woodland off Six Fields path for BMX bike riding is not mentioned. This area has entertained many young people over the last 10-15 years and should be retained within the Tent1 development. It is of equal importance to the younger generation as the proposed skate park.
7. TDRA support the proposal to develop the Pavilion as a youth hub.
8. The proposal for a gymnastics facility for use by Kestrel Gymnastics would appear to be aimed at drawing participants from a much wider area than Tenterden, perhaps from a wider area than Ashford Borough. As such, whilst we support the concept of the facility at the Leisure Centre, we question the need for involvement of funding from TTC.
9. The education element of the S106 contribution from the Tent1 development amounting to some £450,000 is required to be used for the purposes specified in the S106 Agreement: "the provision of additional classroom accommodation and ancillary facilities at Homewood School". The reference to a max value of £450,000 for a 3G Pitch at Homewood appears to be optimistic.
10. The views expressed by the consultants regarding the proposal for a cinema reflect some rather confused thinking. While arguing that a cinema "does not make obvious commercial sense" (p65) they suggest (p63) that "a theatrical cinema is a private operation and will probably happen anyway". TDRA strongly support the concept of a cinema in Tenterden while the TDRA committee and its members have no commercial involvement or interest in the cinema other than as possible future ticket buyers!

11. The proposals regarding Coombe Lane had no support from the community and it was acknowledged that there would likely be resistance from the residents to any proposal. The inclusion of this proposal appears to have more to do with the commercial interests of Lipton Group than the residents of Tenterden!

Yours

Alan Bates
Chairman
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