

COUNCIL UPDATE 6/2021

FINBERRY PLANNING ISSUES

There are a number of issues that are being progressed with Crest:

1. ABC have asked Crest and its planning advisors about progress with the Management Plan concerning Captains Wood and are awaiting a response. There is expected to be a stakeholder group meeting.
2. The link road between Swift Avenue and Rutledge Avenue was expected to be completed upon occupancy of 401 properties at Finberry. We are past that point so ABC are chasing Crest who are aware of the breach. An important consideration here is when the Bellamy Gurner (BG) scheme upgrades to the A2070 (orbital park roundabout being upgraded to a 4-arm traffic light controlled junction) and the Finberry site entrance will finally proceed: only with that will connectivity benefit both Bridgefield and Finberry residents by giving onwards route choice when leaving Finberry rather than the 'left out' interim arrangement. The Council is awaiting Highways England to finally confirm when the BG scheme will start: indications so far are that this could be Spring 2021 with an anticipated 12month build. I have asked the DfT if they can confirm the work carried out on the A2070 is preparatory work.
3. HML are obliged to involve residents in the management of common spaces at Finberry. This is so they have a say in the levy of the service charge. ABC are chasing HML/Crest for progress.

These issues are in addition to "standing" issues including the long-promised bus service, community centre and retail development. As work has started south of Captains Wood there must be demand for new properties on Finberry so these facilities will be expected soon.

ABC's approval for land south of Captains Wood took into account sensible proximity of new homes to the Wood and copied the previous approach on the opposite side of the Wood. ABC took into account representations from the Kent Wildlife Trust and KCC Ecology. A strong minimum woodland buffer zone around the entire Wood (in some instances more) will provide a contextual relationship between existing and new development taking into account the value and nature of the wood. Furthermore, through the planting regime in that buffer zone, it would offer additional habitat creation and so would assist in terms of enhancing the biodiversity of the site.

Crest have been given sign-off from ABC that their planning application for landscaping in "Green Street" has been completed in accordance with the original planning application (ref 10/01277/AS). The overall development plan for Finberry is below which shows the location of Green Street.

PARKING RESTRICTIONS AT CHURCH ROAD, MERSHAM

Additional parking restrictions proposed at Farriers Arms / Village Hall are being consulted on until 17th May 2021.



Comments can be made to

https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/Church_Road_Mersham_waiting_rest/consultationHome

FOOTPATHS THROUGH AND AROUND THE SEVINGTON IBF

KCC has received an application to extinguish some lengths of Public Footpaths and create some new lengths of Public Bridleway through and surrounding Sevington IBF. Under the Highways Act 1980, an Order may be made to close or divert a Public Footpath, Bridleway or Restricted Byway where it is in the interests of the landowner and/or the public to do so. In considering a proposal, the County Council will have regard to whether the new route is substantially less convenient to the public and the impact of the proposed diversion on the public enjoyment of the route as a whole.

In summary, the footpath from Sevington Church to Highfield Land has applied to be extinguished with a replacement route alongside Church Road / Highfield Lane. Separately, the footpath from Highfield Land to Blind Lane is being upgraded to all-weather surface. I have asked that the closure is temporary as the DfT only intend to use the IBF for 5 years and these seems no reason for this to be permanent.

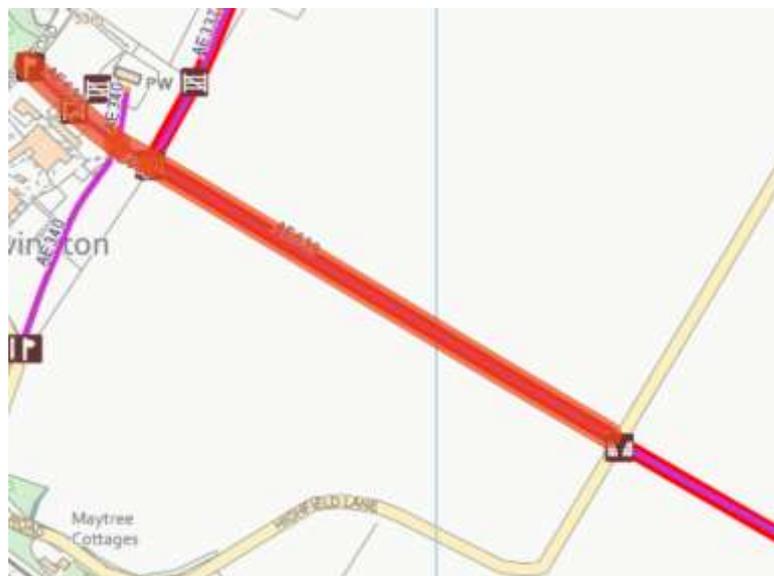
The deadline for responses is 14th May 2021 on the KCC website.

https://kccconsultations.inconsult.uk/SevingtonMershamPPO/consultationHome?fbclid=IwAR1H0xNcsxjxpAfv4Fst6J9eWWKADzRIY1_6muLYvnvsVNMkFUaLmidekAU

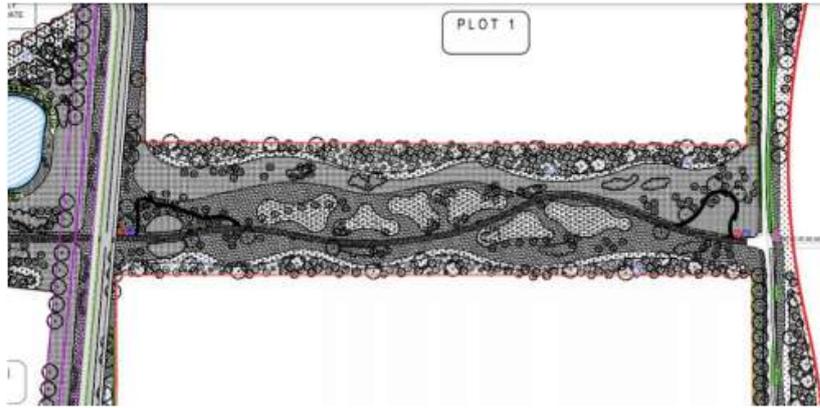
My reply was:

I do wish to object to the permanent extinguishment the entire width of that length of Public Footpath numbered AE639 commencing from its junction with Public Footpath AE337A and running in a south-easterly direction for 512 metres to its junction with Highfield Lane, as shown between the points F and B on the Order Plan and illustrated below:

The reason for my objection is that the footpath is an ancient footway on the protected viewing corridor between St Mary's Sevington and St John the Baptist, Mersham. Ashford Borough Council have expressed a desire to the current landowners to see the landscape treatment for the viewing corridor (which includes AE639) to pay particular attention to, and follow as closely as possible, the approach to the corridor that was negotiated by ABC when determining approval of reserved matters application 19/00579/AS with the previous owners (a diagram showing the scheme agreed which includes a retained footpath is shown below).



I would wish to see the current landowner demonstrates careful thought for the future footpaths provision through the scheme.



It is accepted that for the duration of the temporary use of the site for IBF purposes a PROW will not run through the landscape corridor. However, the approach to landscape architecture including a PROW in this important space also needs to be cognisant of the intention for a PROW to exist through that corridor once the temporary use of the land ceases. A strategy for that is currently being negotiated by the Borough Council with the DfT as part of a further s.106 agreement. The approach to footpath retention design should be one that can accommodate a PROW through the site at a future stage.

I would have no objection to an extension to the temporary closure until the DfT leaves the site.”

SEVINGTON IBF BIODIVERSITY

The DfT have set out some of the activities undertaken during development of Sevington IBF in order to mitigate environmental impacts of the scheme and enhance biodiversity.

- Reduced development along the western boundary of the site to minimise potential visual/setting impacts on the Church.
- Incorporated a viewing corridor across the centre of the site, keeping infrastructure out of the view line between the spires of St Mary Church and the Church of St John the Baptist in Mersham.
- Reduced and reconfigured the area in the north-west corner of the site to retain a line of mature trees.
- Retain important hedgerow alongside Highfield Lane due to the presence of dormouse populations.
- Noise barriers across the site have been integrated into the site involving a mix of bunds and fences.
- Reptiles have been translocated to a newly created and enhanced reptile receptor area.
- The site wide drainage system incorporates SuDs (Sustainable Drainage Systems) across the site. This ensures control of surface water run-off and also provides treatment to the run-off from the site.

Several penstock valves have also been incorporated into the drainage which can be manually operated in the event of a spillage to prevent contaminants entering the site while a clean-up is being undertaken.

- Isolated drainage system for the Border Control Post (BCP) has been designed to reduce nutrient loading to the watercourses. The wastewater from this facility will be treated separately to the site wide surface water drainage to ensure there is no nutrient loading.
- All buildings on site will be no larger than 12m and recessive in colour to limit their visual prominence.
- The site landscape design incorporates vegetated earth bunds at key locations to aid screening. A variety of native planting types and associated habitats including species rich grassland/meadow planting, ponds and swales, native hedgerows, trees and shrubs as well as small scale woodland planting to aid landscape integration, will provide a sense of place and aid visual screening of the site. This will provide a biodiversity net gain for the site too through the establishment of new habitats the design has ensured that the ecological attributes of the replacement habitats are of greater ecological value than the pre-existing habitats.
- Six dormouse, ten bat and ten bird boxes installed across the site.

Proposals for a long-term enhancement strategy for the site are being developed to ensure a positive long-term legacy for the local community. These proposals would be included in the reinstatement plan to be implemented following the 5-year operation of the site and would involve further environmental enhancements implemented at this stage.

IBF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

A wide range of issues continue to be raised as the IBF now moves into the operational phase:

- Debris along Church Road / Cheesemans Green Lane and what is left of Highfield Lane.
- Contractor vehicles parking in Church Road during soil movements from the High Field.
- Damaged signage & salt bins due to HGV movements on Church Road and Cheesemans Green Lane.
- Rubbish bins to be designed to minimise gulls.
- Ambient night-time lighting including height of lights in areas not used by HGVs.
- Nature of planting in viewing corridor and surrounding balancing bonds nearest to properties.
- Graffiti risk on fencing.
- Ongoing use of diesel generators before site connected to national grid.
- Timing of repair works to Church Road and Kingsford Street (to facilitate emergency access to IBF).

- Date of reopening Highfield Lane to non-motorised traffic and completion of new footpath/cycleway from Highfield Lane to Blind Lane is expected to be 1 July 2021.
- Status of s106 and note of what has been agreed and issues "inherited" from the AXA development.
- Repairs to Kingsford Street to facilitate emergency access to IBF.
- Review of traffic following removal of marshal on A20.
- Progress with HE on improved M20 signage.
- Progress on topsoil removal adjoining Highfield Lane.

The email for reporting issues is complaints.sevingtonibf@hmrc.gov.uk.

ADDITIONAL LITTER CLEARING

Ashford has suffered from additional littering during the Post EU transition period, in fairness not just from HGV's. Therefore, until the middle of June 2021, there will be additional road cleansing on the A20, A2070, A2042, A28, A2080, A2082 and A251.

WATERBROOK

I have asked the EA to investigate the topsoil that has been located south of Ashford Truck Stop and the location of container units nearby. HMRC have been asked to switch off the lights and diesel generators at the (now closed) Waterbrook IBF.

WYVERN AT TOWERS

Wyvern School is a special school for pupils with Profound, Severe and Complex Needs. A satellite of the School is proposed to be located at The Towers School and Sixth Form Centre from September 2021. The satellite at The Towers School and Sixth Form Centre will be for up to 24 children. The number of pupils with an Education and Health Care Plan has dramatically increased in the last five years. KCC needs to increase specialist provision and this proposal gives KCC the opportunity to do so.

The proposal represents an opportunity for staff to share their knowledge and expertise to the full, and the opportunity to increase their professional skills for the benefit of all pupils. The proposal will:

- Encourage and enable pupils to learn, develop and flourish and make the best possible progress, supported by Wyvern School.
- Develop shared values across both schools.
- Enable staff to access expertise and knowledge from both schools.

WWTW

The action plan submitted by Southern Water Services with respect to odours at the Bybrook Wastewater Treatment Works has been revised. The

individual measures are listed below. *Residents should continue to report odour incidents during these works.*

Delivery by August 2021

- Automated storm tank cleansing system to be installed into the nine storm tanks.
- Trials to relocate cake storage and maturation to locations considered less likely to impact Little Burton Farm.
- Installation odour control solution at cess reception wet well.

Due by December 2021

- Report on the outcome of cake trials, and assessment of alternatives. Report to provide decision on way forward and delivery dates for such options, which may include dedicated cake bins, buildings, silos, and the improved sludge processes and optimised retention.

Delivery by March 2022

- Repair of damaged cover on sludge reception tank.
- Covering of two sludge reception tanks.
- Integration of the three sludge reception tanks into a dedicated or main site odour control unit (OCU).
- Connection of sludge tanker venting to a dedicated OCU.
- Increase capacity of main site OCU.
- Assessment and review of OCU performance in terms of odour removal functionality based on odour constituent analysis and functionality increased where required.
- Review and amendment of OCU extraction rates for dryer building fugitive emissions, coupled with compliance with odour management plan requirements (doors closed etc.)
- Damage/collapsed cold liquors tank cover to be repaired/replaced.

Delivery by May 22

- Already covered and carbon filtered cess reception wet well to be extracted to dedicated OCU.
- Tanker venting at cess reception wet well to be connected to dedicated OCU as above.

Delivery by August 2022

- Post-digestion storage tank venting to be connected to the combined heat and power system or OCU – deadline also imposed as an Industrial Emissions Directive requirement.

GET HOME SAFE: SAFE BY DESIGN FOR WOMEN

A new guide has been published for councils to create safer journeys for women. It sets out six areas where the council is expected to focus to improve

safety in public spaces with a focus of the first and last mile of journeys for women.

- Natural and manmade structures which design in safety, ambience and comfort, e.g. planting clear of major sightlines not higher than 1m, trees prioritised over shrubs, seating with good viability and spaces not overly fortified with walls and barriers.
- “Eyes on the Street” maximising the opportunities for human activity to create a collective sense of safety and reduce isolation.
- The design and application of technological innovation (street digital infrastructure etc) to improve safety and comfort.
- Engineering measures to “wire in” safety ambience and comfort, e.g. clear wide footways, CCTV and bus shelters which maximise intervisibility.
- Create “places for people” with a community spirit and ethos, e.g. establishing safe havens and well-signposted routes to transport interchanges.
- “Look and feel” aspects which creates a cared for streetscape where the local community takes active ownership to preserve and enhance, e.g. art work and murals on blank walls. A reporting mechanism must be in place for residents to report issues with maintenance and cleanliness.

The report can be found at <https://www.snclavalin.com/~media/Files/S/SNC-Lavalin/documents/transportation/get-home-safe.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2PiGex4AcZ2RD2wOwuzgF4ekzrw7niZ1FFmPpBOyuiqSKrl-aex-YkhoM>

BROWNFIELD SITES IN ASHFORD

The Government has placed requirement on the Council to prepare, maintain and publish a register of brownfield land assessed as being potentially suitable for residential development. The Registers are intended to complement the Government's aim that 90% of suitable brownfield sites have planning permission for housing. The register for Ashford can be viewed at the following link. <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/planning-and-development/planning-policy/timetables-and-monitoring/brownfield-register/>

New planning legislation is expected to require all councils to designate land for development or preservation. The legislation is expected to be intended to “clear obstacles to house building and broader development” and to help the Government hit its house-building target of 300,000 a year. These reforms will follow proposals already announced to empower individuals, community groups and private companies to challenge public bodies, including councils, to release vacant land and properties for redevelopment to encourage community regeneration.

ASHFORD CRIME STATS

Key findings from strategic assessment

- Total crime in Ashford has reduced by -14.2% when comparing the periods January – December 2019 to January – December 2020. Across Kent there has been a reduction of a - 10.5% in total crime. All districts record a reduction in crime, and Ashford has the largest percentage reduction.
- There are significant decreases across many crime types, with Covid19 having a significant impact. The crimes that show an increase are:
 - Rape (+9.8%)
 - Possession of weapon offences (+25%)
 - Drug offences possession (+66.9%)
 - Offences with a domestic abuse flag have increased from 2,102 to 2,296

The Bockhanger Community Health Engagement Survey will be rolled out in September.

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