

## **COUNCIL UPDATE 12.2024**

### **NEWLY MIGRATED PARENTS**

I was pleased to speak to a group on 1<sup>st</sup> December about the services offered by KCC to newly migrated parents. Here is what I told the group

*Most children and young people have a number of basic needs that are well supported through a range of universal services. These services include schools, early years education and childcare, health, housing, youth services, leisure facilities and services provided by voluntary organisations. However, some children have more additional or complex needs and may require access to additional, intensive or specialist services to support them.*

*The levels of support and which agencies should be supporting a child, young person or families is detailed in Multi-agency Support Level Guidance available <https://www.kscmp.org.uk/guidance/worried-about-a-child>*

*However, the Council recognises that website information is not fully accessible, so we have a "Front Door" which works closely with agencies working with newly arrived migrant families to ensure that their staff are aware of Support Level Guidance.*

*We hold information sessions / workshops on rights and responsibilities in the UK; this includes UK laws, social norms, expectations, rights and responsibilities related to being a parent. This includes supervision and disciplining children, understanding UK education system, laws to protect children from physical/emotional harm, female genital mutilation / circumcision, children/parent rights, marriage, etc).*

*KCC provides a link for families into the Family Hubs, as well as health providers. Referrals to the Front Door of Children Services over any safeguarding concerns and early help services for parents requiring additional support.*

*We offer support to schools to help them understand the needs of children and parents that come through the resettlement schemes. The Education People go into specific schools to deliver sessions to children in relation to behaviour, transition within the school system etc. They have delivered their 'Supporting Children's Wellbeing Programme' to children in school.*

*Intensive support (Early Help) can be offered to children and families where they have complex or multiple needs requiring local authority services to work together with universal services. We offer specialist support (Children's Social Work) for children who are considered to have suffered or be at risk of suffering significant harm.*

*On receiving a Request for Support the initial decision will determine next steps including gathering more information from the referrer, other agencies and from the family. The use of language line enables communication with parents where English is not the first language. If the level of support required does not meet the threshold for intensive Early Help or Children's Social Work the referrer will be signposted to services in the communities, including Family Hubs and KCC Refugee resettlement service, to support the family and children.*

*Where the concerns for the child meet the threshold of risk of significant harm, the Front Door will hold a multi-agency strategy discussion to determine next steps to safeguard the child/ren.*

*There is close cooperation with immigration colleagues at Manston to identify children newly arrived on small boats with their families where there are significant concerns, with particular focus on trafficked children, forced marriage and children who may not be travelling with an adult with parental responsibility. If required, steps are taken to immediately safeguard those*

children. Where families require ongoing support onward referrals are made to the receiving Local Authorities.

We recognise that arriving in the UK can be a scary and daunting time so please reach out to your local councillor – we are there to help and do the very best for you.



**Welfare Intervention Officers**

If you are struggling to understand any of the following issues, the Welfare Intervention Officers are here to help you with:

- Council Tax advice, including Council Tax debt advice
- Help to claim Council Tax Support or Housing Benefit
- Help to claim Discretionary Housing Payments or Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Payments
- General housing advice, including advice regarding rent arrears
- Referrals for homelessness advice
- General advice around all welfare reform such as the benefit cap, Universal Credit and other benefit changes

For help please contact us today: [welfare@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:welfare@ashford.gov.uk)

The poster features a row of colorful icons representing various groups of people: a person with a stroller, a family, a person with a cane, and a person in a wheelchair. To the right are the Ashford Borough Council crest and logo.

ABC have officers who can advise you. Call them on 01233 331111 or email on [welfare@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:welfare@ashford.gov.uk)

## INTEGRATED CARE PARTNERSHIP (ICP)

The ICP met on 2<sup>nd</sup> December. The following items of note arose:

- Winter pressures mean that KCC are running a vaccination campaign for their own front-line staff. Vaccine uptake has dropped to a post-Covid low. New figures show that winter jab uptake among both the over 65s and frontline workers is at its lowest in years. It has been reported that analysis by the National Audit Office suggests that fewer than half of eligible adults take part in NHS Health Checks. Introduced in 2009, the checks are designed to help spot people at higher risk of getting certain health problems and offer practical tips on how to prevent them.
- KCC has decided to use money from Household Support Fund to those “just missing out” on winter fuel payments. It consists of vouchers and advice on how to claim pension credits – KCC estimates that there are 18,000 in Kent who are eligible for pension credit but have not taken it up. The government deadline for applying for pension credit for winter 2024/25 closed on 22<sup>nd</sup> December.
- Kent Coastal (including Ashford) is part of the Marmot Coastal strategy which will concentrate on reducing smoking and getting people into education/employment.
- A new KCC 5-year strategy on education is being developed with consultation opened until 11<sup>th</sup> December.

- There are 3,654 children (from 17,608 households) in temporary accommodation across Kent and Medway. The need for affordable housing is estimated at 4,857 pa with only 1,544 pa delivered on average. There are also 13,400 specialist housing units (for elderly / disabled) are required. There are considerable impacts of poor housing on public health – overcrowding, less to spend on healthy food, lack of secure housing leads to stress and anxiety and non-decent homes leads to falls and cold. My solution better housing delivery is for Council Tax to be charged on unbuilt homes once planning consent is granted – this would focus developers attention on delivering units.
- Homeless children placed in hotels/B&Bs are developing rickets and other diet-related health problems because their parents lack anywhere to cook. Research has shown that families living in temporary accommodation were eating an unhealthy diet of takeaways and snack foods because they had no cooking facilities or anywhere to store fresh produce.
- Government planning Inspectors are raising concerns about the justification used by the NHS for s106 funding from new developments. An example was how the Planning Inspector has approved plans to build 655 new homes north of Possingham Farmhouse as an extension to Chilmington Green in Great Chart. The application was rejected by ABC. The Inspector said that the justification used by the NHS for funding was “scant” and that new properties did not mean new patients. In the Planning Inspectors decision, it says "I have a number of concerns with the scant justification provided. First, it is stated that the development would result in 1,572 new patient registrations when using an average occupancy of 2.4 people per dwelling. However, that seems unlikely as it assumes that every resident would be new to the area whereas in reality, many will already live in the Ashford area and be registered with a GP." ***This is rubbish***. Regardless of where the residents of the new houses have come from, there will be an increase in the total population of 1,572 people for whom a GP surgery will be needed. What the Inspector failed to realize is that even if the new residents in Possingham farm already live in Ashford, the properties they vacate will bring in new residents to the borough. The figures used by the NHS are based on real numbers drawn from actual experience and should not be dismissed by the Inspector in such a cavalier fashion. Government needs to up its game on getting access to developer contributions.

### **EAST KENT HOSPITALS UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION TRUST (EKHUFT)**


EKHUFT held a meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> December to gather views on its 10 year strategy – “an ambitious blueprint with aims that include improving patient outcomes, addressing health inequalities and the delivery of sustainable quality care for the population of East Kent and beyond for some of our

specialist services”. They plan to make improvements to waiting times, we use funding effectively and efficiently, and work with partners to deliver the standard of care we want for every patient, every day.


I made the point that it needs to address the fact that it has struggled financially particularly accessing funding from NHSE for the Stroke Review and acute services reconfiguration. It is has struggled on recruitment and having three acute hospitals to manage in its portfolio – two trusts would be better given the geography of having a coast line and travel problems getting patients to the hospitals.


## KENT WALKING AND CYCLING STRATEGY

The Group met at KCC on 3<sup>rd</sup> December to discuss how to apply for £1.8m of a grant award that was notified to the Council on 12<sup>th</sup> November. We discussed two schemes in Ashford that I promoted – improving cycling and walking access from town centre to Repton and creating cycling/walking walks to/from the schools in Chilmington Green. The next step is for the schemes to be sent to Active Travel England by 10<sup>th</sup> December to see if they can be taken to the next stage.




- Development bid
- Identified as part of the adopted Ashford Area LCWIP 2019-2029.
- Route 4 connects Ashford Town Centre to Repton and Victoria Park.
- ABC Active Travel Meeting Committee including two cabinet Cllr's were taken through a presentation of Route 4 as a priority route based on the Sustrans report
- Consultation yet to be undertaken





**Development Project**

- Feasibility Study Complete
  - Outline designs of key scheme elements
  - Separated into 6 sections
  - Each section looked at 2 Options and "Do Less" & "Do More"
- Run through ATE risk check assessment
  - The existing route has a score of 12% with seven critical issues – with interventions the score would be 60% with no critical issues.
  - Outcome – much-improved walking and cycling route





Investigate a potential footway from Ashford Prep School to a new secondary school. Development bid.

Great Chert to Chilmington - bid





**Development bid**

- Working Cycle lane link supported to main. Highlighted several options across busy A road with high volumes of motor traffic.
- Proposed Dedicated cycle phase. Cycle area from major road with wide dedicated cycle facility to separate phase to motor traffic.
- Add a critical part of scheme to local cycle network.
- Example of a dedicated cycle crossing at a T-junction. Dedicated push buttons for cyclists.




## JOINT TRANSPORT BOARD

The Board met on 3<sup>rd</sup> December. A key discussion was over Ashford's busses. KCC has been allocated £23m of funding for 2025/26 which it will use to protect existing services with any additional funding to deliver sustainable improvements. Many projects are Kent wide, such as holding the Kent Travel Savers cost to £450 – this is a pass that allows those in education

to access busses at a discount. Specifically in Ashford £450k was spent on installing the bus enforcement cameras at Beaver Road and Sackville Crescent (further work is needed at the Bridgefield Accommodation Bridge to install one there).

Other issues discussed included:

- Work to improve the surface on the A2042 Beaver Road / Victoria Road / Ave Jacques Fauchaux junction including the bridge over the railway are proposed but are now awaiting UKPN works. I have asked for a yellow box junction as part of my Highway Improvement Plan (HIP).



- Work on resurfacing Quantock Drive from Maidstone Road to Malvern Road are proposed for 2024/26.
- Work to remove and replace damaged Aco channels and replace with a better product in Elwick Road are completed.
- Work on strengthening the Forstall Bridge in Flood Street is still programmed for 2025/26 – the investigation has shown that it is necessary to replace more of the existing structure which increased the scope of work. The proposed structure will use the foundations of the existing and retain the alignment but have a new deck. The bridge will feature timber parapets and improvements to the pedestrian provision.
- The government announced on 20<sup>th</sup> December that the funding that the old government provided for the pothole blitz in 2024 will be replicated in 2025; funding will apply from April 2025.
- In September 2024 Ashford Borough Council Parking Service held an informal consultation with the residents on the Croudace Development (Pavilion View, Hythe Crescent, Romney Crescent & Atherfield Drive) regarding the introduction of a Controlled Parking Zone which mimicked those in operation elsewhere in Ashford. The proposed scheme was to introduce permits to residents and allow non-residents to park for two hours, with no return within four hours. The roads, until recently adopted by KCC, had private parking enforcement in operation. ABC believe this area will be vulnerable to non-residents parking their vehicles and taking advantage of free parking on the only unrestricted streets within the town centre. ABC received a high number of objections to this proposed scheme (47%) with only 33% fully supporting it. The formal notices were issued on 18<sup>th</sup> December. On 25 October 2024 ABC held

a second informal consultation with amended plans for the introduction of a “Permit Parking Area” which would allow only residents and their visitors to park on the streets listed above. Vehicles without permits would be unable to park for any period of time, except for loading and unloading. The consultation was sent to the same 81 properties as the first consultation and 18 responded, with 83% now in favour of the proposed scheme. This proposed scheme runs differently to ABC existing permit schemes nearby and I supported that ABC takes this second proposal to a full public consultation which begun before Christmas.



## HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PLANS

A report which shows all 2024/25 KCC HIP and Parish funded schemes in Ashford to date has been published, extracts of interest are listed but does not reflect all schemes as some will have been funded by other means, such as Local Transport Plan monies, Section 106 money, Community Members Grant or Highways Improvement Plan’s small works budget.

Church Road, Sevington- Double Yellows Lines	AS	HIP Budget	Double Yellow Lines on Church Road, Sevington to allow access	Design
A20, Hythe Road, Mersham- Pedestrian Island	AS	Parish	Installation of a pedestrian island on the western side of the junction between the A20 & The Street with a short extension of	Investigation
Church Road, Sevington- No Through Road Sign Relocation	AS	HIP Budget	HGVs reportedly travelling down Church Road, Sevington and getting stuck on the residential estate not realising that it is a no through road.	Complete
Mace Lane, Ashford- Cyclists Dismount Signage	AS	HIP Budget	Cyclists using the narrow pavement across the bridge on Mace Lane causing near misses with pedestrians. For installation of 2x Cyclists Dismount signs on each approach.	Design
A2042, Ashford- Keep Clear Markings	AS	HIP Budget	County Member Paul Bartlett reporting issues with vehicles exiting Dover Place, Ashford, onto the A2042 due to vehicles queuing at the traffic lights. Especially difficult for vehicles wanting to get into lane 3 to turn towards Elwick Road. Installation of Keep Clear Markings on the A2042 at the junction with Dover Place. Advice from Richard having spoken to ITS: "they	Ordered
South Stour Road, Mersham - Advanced Give Way Sign	AS	HIP Budget	Two recorded injury collisions and one recent collision (not yet received the report) whereby vehicles have overshot the junction on the crossroads between South Stour Road, Bank Road, Flood Street, & Cooper's Lane. All 3 collisions are vehicles approaching on the South Stour Road arm of the crossroads.	Complete
Kennington- 20mph Zone	AS	Parish	Implementation of a 20mph zone around Ulley Road north of Faversham Road, Kennington (image if location attached below)	Investigation
Aldington- Frith Road, Priory Road, Cooper's Lane Crossroad	AS	HIP Budget	Crossroad of Frith Road, Priory Road & Cooper's Lane is in a state of disrepair and a series of recent collisions has been reported by residents, parish Councillors, and county members which suggest a pattern of drivers going through the STOP junctions. Both STOP signs are worn out and don't appear to be reflective, and all of the lining and STOP markings are worn away.	Complete
Mersham- Chequer Tree Farm Road Slow Markings	AS	HIP Budget	2x SLOW Markings Installation of SLOW markings on Chequer Tree Farm Road, next to current "Junction of Bend" warning signage on both approaches to	Complete
Mersham- Coopers Lane & Flood Street Slow Markings	AS	HIP Budget	2x SLOW Markings Installation of SLOW markings on Coopers Lane & Flood Street to accompany current "Crossroads Ahead" warning signage on the approaches to the crossroads with Bank Road & Roman Road	Complete
Aldington- Frith Road SLOW Markings	AS	HIP Budget	Frith Road with Priory Road & Coopers Lane, Aldington. 2x SLOW markings next to current "Crossroad Ahead" warning signs on both	Complete
TMA - Beaver Road	AS	External	Beaver Road, Ashford - Enforcement Improvements	Complete
TMA - Sackville Crescent	AS	External	Bridge, Sackville Crescent, Ashford - Enforcement Improvements	Complete
TMA - Bluebell Road, Ashford	AS	External	Bridge between Bluebell Road and Finn Farm, Ashford -	Design
Mersham speed limit, gateways, signing & lining	AS	Parish	HIP 30mph speed limit extension, gateway, signing & lining	Complete

## COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT

The Group met on 5<sup>th</sup> December.

- Problems with lorry parking on Henwood has been reported by Kent Fire and Rescue. There are enhanced lorry parking restrictions on areas agreed with the DfT in Ashford that can be enforced at higher rates. These include the A20 Hothfield, Orbital and Ashford Business Parks, Ellingham and Wotton Road. Henwood was excluded as the A292 is regarded as a key route between Ashford and Folkestone.
- Publicly available information on "Stop and Search" has been requested.

- Rough sleepers have been reported as using the entrance court at Dymchurch Court in Godinton Road. Contact details for rough sleepers to access support from ABC are available from the new outsourced provider, Serveco (0330 2231669 or [info@serveco.co.uk](mailto:info@serveco.co.uk)). The proposed shelter at Bright City was not taken forward due to policy changes at Central Government precluding shelters. Instead, three B&B units (not Fortis House) are used for rough sleepers. No flyer is produced with contact details to hand out as ABC feel it will attract rough sleepers to Ashford; instead, a reception centre (the Beacon centre near Centrepiece) will open in January each morning at 8.30am for an hour for support and advice.
- The rough sleeping count has now taken place (at 4.30am) and there were 7 in Ashford which will be reported to the government.
- Whenever temperatures drop below freezing, ABC activates the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP). SWEP was activated in early December, allowing them to bring six rough sleepers into emergency accommodation.
- When the Monitoring Centre is moved to International House a news story will be out reminding residents that the Centre is live and monitored and not just recorded. The fact that it is live and monitored is important for the Police in being able to respond to issues as they happen, keeping people in Ashford safe.
- KCC Warden Service have signed up 10 people to Pension Credits following the cut in winter fuel payments.

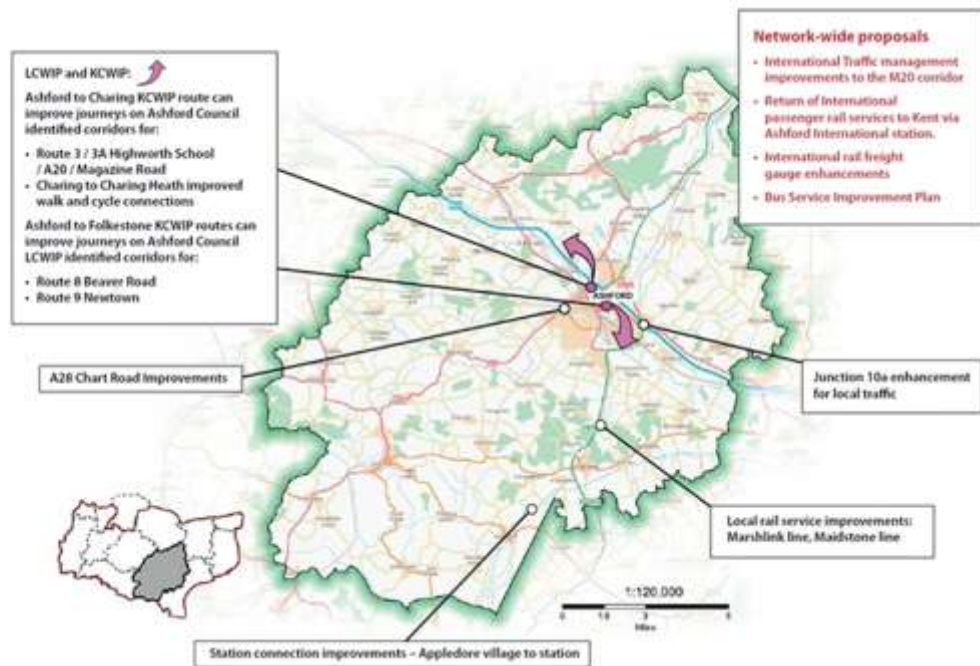
## **KENT TRANSPORT PLAN**

Councillors met to discuss on 9<sup>th</sup> December. Key issues for Ashford are:

- J10a local traffic enhancements. This idea is to helping traffic from Hythe Road to get onto the junction due to the volume of strategic traffic that joins and exits the junction from the M20.
- A28 upgrades to dual Chart Road between the Matalan and 'Tank' roundabouts (more on that under the Chilmington Green Section).
- New cycling routes from Ashford to Charing and Ashford to Folkestone (via Hythe).
- Marshlink rail improvements including better connection from Appledore Village to the station.
- HGV traffic on local roads (Brock and IBF related). The National Highways priorities ("Road Investment Strategy") are due to be published by DfT in spring 2025, hopefully this will have a plan for local freight management including additional parking for HGVs.
- International rail links for passengers at Ashford and better use of HS1 for freight.
- Bus service improvements.



## Ashford district proposals



## CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

The panel met on 10<sup>th</sup> December. Issues of note included:

- KCC Children in Care and Adopted held two trips to The Big Cat Sanctuary in Smarden.
- The KCC team are visiting Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People reception centres and children's homes to build relationships with young people and their workers. This is to carry out fact finding about what the young people currently in the centres would like support with and what feedback they would like to share, with a view to providing participation, tailored to the young people's needs.
- 2023-4 saw an increase in those Children in Care not in education, employment and training (NEET) for a second consecutive year. This is a concerning trend but is in line with the national picture. At 17.8%, the KCC post 16 cohort NEET rate is still below the latest national NEET rate. An identified problem is that children who come into KCC care part way through a year cannot access college training until the next September.

## TOWN CENTRE HIGHWAYS

Peter Feacey, Bill Barrett and I met with KCC highways team to walk around the town centre on 11<sup>th</sup> December. We reported several issues and had a wider discussion about Beaver Road Bridge, Victoria Road, Elwick Square and Bank Street including the wonky signpost on Godinton Road.



## ASHFORD HEALTH ALLIANCE

The Group met on 12<sup>th</sup> December. Key issues included:

- KCC have appointed an officer to support delivery of “Marmot Coastal Area” in east Kent (which includes Ashford). Marmot Coastal is a project to ensure (amongst other things) that employment opportunities promote good health. The IBF was cited as an example.
- Focus groups are planned for early 2025 to investigate vaping in Ashford and agree the next steps following a recently completed survey (of 5,000 plus) on vaping – the results are not yet in the public domain. The focus group will explore the reasons for vaping and how it can become addictive and used for reducing anxiety, weight control, image, social media and family/peer pressure. Access to illegal vapes will be considered - 27% do not buy vapes from shops. Most use a disposable vape.
- Healthwatch are carrying out a survey on how veterans are engaging with health services in Kent.
- KCC are holding a drop-in event at 10am on 10<sup>th</sup> January at Ashford Gateway on proposed changes to KCC wellbeing services in the community. KCC wellbeing services is a proactive approach to health and wellbeing, increase independence, and prevent, reduce or delay the need for additional care and support services. The consultation link is <https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/wellbeingconsultation>
- Ashford Monitoring Centre are relinquishing the “Lifeline” link, as it is being transferred to a new provider.

## DEVOLUTION

The proposals were published on 16<sup>th</sup> December, councillors had a briefing once announced. The changes will affect Kent and Medway with a mayoral

authority cover the peninsula, this is not optional. Changes may move at pace with a mayor possibly elected by May 2026. This change will give the new mayoral authority additional powers including over transport (including rail), education, skills & employment, integrated healthcare, strategic planning including affordable housing and net zero/local recovery strategy for nature. There will be no need for County and Borough authorities. To provide community representation to a new east Kent unitary authority, those areas without a parish council will need to create one. "Priority Areas" (which may or may not include Kent) will be announced in January 2025 – if Kent is a priority area, the May 2025 elections may be postponed.

Local electoral turnout in this country is at the bottom of the turnout league across Europe, in no small part because of the size of our councils. It will be disappointing if there is a further decline in turnout if new unitarities are formed.

### **NHS WINTER PLANS**

Councillors had a briefing on 17th December on the NHS plans to deal with winter pressures. The number of beds occupied by patients effected by the "quad-demic" of flu, norovirus, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and Covid-19 was up by 70% in a week. We were assured the NHS has a plan in place to manage additional demand but (before the meeting) there was little time left to book a vaccine - both the flu and Covid-19 could only be booked online up until 19<sup>th</sup> December at <https://www.getvaccinatednow.co.uk/>

The UK Health Security Agency said the flu season is hitting earlier due to unpredictable factors including socialising patters and the weather. In the week ended 13<sup>th</sup> December there were an average of 2,628 flu patients up from 1,861 the previous week. It was announced at the meeting that flu jabs are now available until 31 March 2025 and Covid-19 until 31 January 2025.

The NHS are promoting the Stop Think Choose campaign to help people find the right care. Their <https://www.stopthinkchoose.co.uk/> website includes details on self-help, urgent treatment centres and pharmacy services.

### **CHILMINGTON GREEN**

The Chilmington Green developers have applied to revamp the legally binding s106 agreement which supports the development of 5,750 new homes.

The requests for changes include abandoning the £32.7m A28 upgrades to dual Chart Road between the Matalan and 'Tank' roundabouts. The developer is also looking to avoid £14.9m contribution for adult education, £900,000 for the library service, up to £239,000 from youth service funding and £800,000 of contributions to a new cemetery and remove previously

allocated space for new allotments. Delays to contributions to off-site pedestrian and cycling routes are requested, delaying implementation of bus services and removal of interim £450 per household parking vouchers totalling £2.5m. It has also asked to remove its obligation to pay £5.62m towards highway improvements that have already happened elsewhere in Ashford including upgrades to the Drover's Roundabout and the construction of the Eureka Skyway bridge that connects Sainsbury's to Eureka Park. The developer has requested to adjust its contributions to provide affordable housing in the development.

The developer wants to submit a new planning application to redesign and remove the proposed district centre - currently earmarked to include a supermarket, retail units, office space, a pub and a day nursery. The developer has applied to delay the start of Chilmington Hamlet which would include a cricket pitch, community pavilion, batting cage, bowling green, two tennis courts, car park and storage facility. There is also an application to delay the construction of children's play area spaces and the Discovery Park sports facilities.

Comments were due [planning.comments@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:planning.comments@ashford.gov.uk) by December 18. Details of what is requested by the developer are at [https://ashfordboroughcouncil.my.site.com/pr/s/appeal/a0XTw000001FAGHM A4/ap90718?c\\_r=Arcus\\_BE\\_Public\\_Register&tabset-f64d5=3a10b](https://ashfordboroughcouncil.my.site.com/pr/s/appeal/a0XTw000001FAGHM A4/ap90718?c_r=Arcus_BE_Public_Register&tabset-f64d5=3a10b). A public inquiry is expected to be held from 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

My objection to the developer requests read as follows:

*The proposal to eliminate the need to upgrade the A28, Chart Road will go against the basic tenant of the KCC Local Transport Plan 4 of "Growth Without Gridlock". The original planning application in 2017 stated that the Chilmington Green development would have a "severe impact" on Chart Road and this remains true – the statement was made by the developers and remains true today and it is inappropriate for the developer to now try and argue that the development can go ahead without mitigation. When the s106B application was first submitted in 2022, there was a proposal to defer the trigger point for the work to start at 2,600 houses, this demonstrated that the developer still believed the upgrade work was essential.*

*Without dualling there will be a severe impact on the road network causing drivers seeking alternative routes such as going through the Repton / Godinton Estates, using J10 or J10A and then Magpie Hall Road when travelling towards Tenterden from the M20 and travelling through Great Chart village if travelling from Tenterden to Ashford. I understand that KCC completed traffic counts in 2023 which shows the adverse impact on Great Chart village the development is having already. The revised mitigation instead of dualling involves improvements at the Matalan Roundabout and changes to the Loudon Way traffic lights and these are insufficient to prevent unacceptable delays.*

*Other changes to the road network are requested by the developer which I do not support including changes to proposed traffic calming on nearby roads including Tally Ho Road, delays to contributions to off-site pedestrian and cycling routes, delayed implementation of bus services and removal of interim £450 per household parking vouchers. The developer has also asked to remove its obligation to pay £5.62m towards highway improvements that*

*have already happened elsewhere including upgrades to the Drover's Roundabout and the construction of the Eureka Skyway bridge that connects Sainsbury's to Eureka Park.*

## **TAXATION OF FARMERS**

At KCC on 19<sup>th</sup> December, a motion was put forward regarding Inheritance Tax (IHT) on farmers. The Budget small print reveals the situation for some farmers is a lot worse than first feared. Some families will face a 91.3% triple death tax on inherited pensions, because of the Budget decision to levy inheritance tax (IHT) on unspent pension pots.

Today, pensioners can pass on any unspent defined contribution pension pots to family members free of all IHT. But from April 2027, unspent pensions will be added to other assets on death for IHT purposes, and anything above the nil rate band will incur IHT at 40%.

Currently, if someone dies before age 75, their beneficiaries receive the entire pension pot tax-free. But from age 75, they pay income tax on the money at their marginal rate, which will normally be 45% if the inherited pension is large.

However, from April 2027, if the deceased is over age 75, most beneficiaries will pay two sets of tax before receiving the inherited pension. First IHT at 40%, then secondly income tax at 45%, resulting in an effective tax rate of 67%. These beneficiaries will therefore only receive 33% of the pension pot after tax.

For some inheriting families the tax rate will be much higher than 67% as they will also incur a third tax charge. This will happen where the inclusion of the pension pot pushes the estate value above £2 million, thereby causing the £175,000 IHT residence nil rate band to taper away to zero.

This tapering away will trigger an additional IHT charge at 40% on a portion of the estate's other assets, resulting in a maximum effective tax rate on the pension pot money of 91.3%! These beneficiaries will therefore only receive 8.7% of the pension pot after all taxes are paid!

## **KNOLL LANE**

I have logged an enquiry (ref 847781) regarding the Knoll Lane crossing used by pupils from John Wesley CoE Primary, Beaver Green Primary School and Chilmington Green Secondary School at Jemmett Road. The crossing is not very safe, and pedestrians and cyclists are at the mercy of the cars who often drive quite fast. A zebra crossing would (i) keep children safe on the way to school, (ii) protect other pedestrians and cyclists to safely cross the roads, (iii) calm traffic down and reduce pollution by doing so encourage walking and cycling to school with increased safety.



### **LOUDON COURT**

Double yellow lines are planned for the entrance to Loudon Court following a review of parking issues arising during school pick up and drop off at the nearby primary school. Public consultation started on 23<sup>rd</sup> December.



### **INLAND BORDER FACILITY**

The Borough Council announced on 23<sup>rd</sup> December that they had accepted the scope of the Environmental Scoping Report planned by the DfT in support of their upcoming planning application. The application is to provide permanent consent for the IBF operations, previously the consent was temporary.

This is disappointing because I asked for the visual impact to be assessed from Cheesemans Green Lane and for the traffic impact to be assessed on local roads in Mersham and Sevington.

Further information is available at <https://ashfordboroughcouncil.my.site.com/pr/s/planning-application/a0hTw00000nzaDIAQ/oth20242051>

## BYBROOK WASTEWATER TREATMENT WORKS (WWTW)

The following letter was distributed on 23<sup>rd</sup> December. A prelude of things to come? There was an aborted planning application for increased lorry movements using Kinneys Lane in November and we will see what the new year has for the site.



**Paul Bartlett**  
**Mersham, Sevington South and Finberry Ward, ABC**  
**Ashford Central Division, KCC**  
**Grosvenor Hall Ward, Kennington Community Council**  
**Sevington Ward, Sevington with Finberry Parish Council**  
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