

GEDCCC District Visits Programme

Highlights of the visit to Ashford Borough Council on 11 October 2019

1. District Deal

Kent County Council (KCC) Members were welcomed by the Leader of Ashford Borough Council (ABC) who outlined the importance of the District Deal between the two councils. Leader Gerry Clarkson felt that improved ways of working together were critical to the significant progress made in delivering key strategic projects.

ABC Leader also emphasised the importance of working with the range of partners engaged in the successful projects in Ashford namely KCC, Network Rail, Highways England, Southern Water, Homes England and Arts Council England.

The District Deal Board meet twice yearly with the Delivery Board meeting quarterly supported by an Officer Group.

2. The 'Big 8' Projects

These were outlined in a presentation which is available from the author of the report to GEDCC. These projects are all now being delivered or have been completed:

Commercial Quarter

A mixed-use development that will maximise the advantages of its location. It will be the dynamic new main business hub in the town, next to the domestic and international railway stations. It will stimulate major investment opportunities, creating several hundred jobs, up to 590,000 square feet of office space and 150 apartments. The council has agreed to work with local developers Quinn Estates Ltd and George Wilson Holdings Ltd on bringing this forward. Phase 1, a 80,500 sq ft office block, opened in spring 2018. A new public realm around International House and along Dover Place is now complete, creating a sense of place, forming an attractive and unmistakable first impression of the town.

Junction 10a of the M20

The future development of Ashford has depended on new motorway junction capacity – specifically J10a of the M20. The government's decision to fund the long-awaited junction will be a catalyst for economic and commercial development in Ashford, creating job opportunities and improving the infrastructure of the town. The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) has secured substantial funding from the Government to help deliver the junction. Work nears completion which is expected in 2020.

Chilmington Green

Outline planning permission was granted in October 2014 for a major new residential community that, subject to further planning consents, will see the development of up to 5,750 quality homes. There will also be schools and infrastructure, including dualling of the A28, and the creation of over 1,000 jobs on the site in shops and education etc. in the next 20 years. Chilmington Green is key to meeting the borough's need for extra homes and

nearly 10 years of careful planning points firmly towards a high quality, carefully planned development. There is a real commitment to delivering the best at Chilmington Green with a charter, outlining 32 commitments to making a quality place and vibrant community, agreed to by developers. Work is currently underway.

Designer Outlet expansion

The expansion of the outlet centre has the scope to further Ashford's international appeal, while creating stronger links to the station and having an offer that complements the town centre with different, significant retailers. The McArthurGlen-planned large expansion would look to create the next generation of designer outlet, reflecting the quality of its flagship McArthurGlen Designer Outlets in Continental Europe and attracting up to 7 million visits a year. The planning application was approved by the council in September 2015. Work started in January 2018 with the expansion expected to open in November 2019.

Elwick Place

Planning permission was granted in December 2015 for a town centre cinema offer with places to eat and drink around a new square and meeting place for the town centre. This first phase of the Elwick Place development opposite County Square will help to bring extra vitality to the town during the day and evening. The Picturehouse cinema and Travelodge Hotel opened in late 2018, with the retail units expected to be filled in due course. The town centre cinema will complement the IMAX cinema at the Eureka Leisure Park at J9 of the M20.

International College Campus

This is a new Ashford College offering further and higher education on a new £26m campus in a key location in the town centre. The Station Road/Elwick Road campus provides a high quality learning facility, immediately opposite the Commercial Quarter, which will help to significantly increase activity in the town centre. The new college opened to students in September 2017 and was the first of the Big 8 projects to be completed

Jasmin Vardimon

A project to provide more cultural space for the Jasmin Vardimon Dance Academy to expand their offer. Progress is being made on their new base on the Henwood Industrial Estate where they would be able to share their inspiring work with local audiences. This renowned company tours nationally and internationally, performing at high profile venues across Europe, Asia, the Middle East and US.

Ashford International signalling

Providing a signalling solution for Ashford International Station, so that the next generation of Eurostar trains can continue to stop at the station is vitally important. A partnership of Kent County Council, Ashford Borough Council, Network Rail, Eurostar, HS1, Department for Transport and the Office for Road and Rail worked closely together to deliver the new signalling by spring 2018.

3. The New Emerging Big 8 Projects

Carbon Neutral by 2030

An aspiration is to achieve this for the borough as a contribution to tackling the effects of climate change.

South of Ashford Garden Community

South of Ashford Garden Community - Garden Village Status The South of Ashford Garden Community is comprised of three developments (Chilmington, Court Lodge and Kingsnorth green) representing 7,250 homes (2,175 affordable), over 1,000 jobs, a 142 hectare Discovery Park along with new schools, health provision, play spaces and ecological areas to be protected.

The Council's largest, most complex, longest running project it is part of the 'BIG 8'. It is intended to be over 50% open space and aims to be a model for sustainable living The Chilmington Management Organisation is now incorporated to manage the assets of the community in the future.

Members were given a guided tour of new houses being built on the site by Hodson Developments.

Town Centre Masterplanning

This includes the masterplanning and improvements to the Victoria Park located centrally within the town centre and adjacent to the newly completed Elwick Road developments.

Conningbrook

A housing development currently underway to the east of the Julie Rose Stadium and surrounding Conningbrook Lakes.

Vicarage Lane and Multi-Storey Car Park

Provision of a new multi-story car park on Station Road and demolition of the existing Odeon Cinema (retaining the façade) to provide a new public square to the rear with cafes and bars.

Newtown Works

Major redevelopment of the former railway works immediately south of the Eurostar and High Speed One railway lines east of Ashford International Station. A significant mixed-use development centered on the creation of TV and film production space. Members were given a guided tour of the existing site by developers Quinn Estates and project partners The Creative District Improvement Company.

Provision of broadband infrastructure

- Openreach micro trenching pilot in Godinton Park.
- Local Plan Policy EMP 6 – Fibre to the Premises policy (FTTP)
- New Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – draft by November.
- Developer and Provider event to discuss SPD Nov/Dec 2019.
- Promoting new KCC top-up vouchers for businesses and residents.

In addition is the development of an **Integrated Transport Strategy** and also a **Cultural Centre**