

The Otford Society NewsLetter

Registered with the Civic Voice
Affiliated to the Campaign to Protect Rural England
and the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies

www.otford.info/otfordsociety

SEPTEMBER 2011

AUTUMN MEETING

on

Thursday, October 20th 2011

at

Otford Village Memorial Hall at 8.00pm

Speaker - Roger Kasper

Editor - Sevenoaks Chronicle



LEAVE OUR GREEN FIELDS ALONE !

Recently we were pleased to hear how the government has been encouraged to make a u-turn with their plans to sell off some of our national forests and woodlands. It seems now we have another major environmental issue to deal with. George Osborne, the Chancellor, has decided to scrap much of the current planning regulations in order to make it easier for developers to build on green field sites. One of his supporters is Greg Clark, who only a few months ago was making passionate speeches about protecting the green belt and other vulnerable plots of land such as large gardens.

The English Heritage, the National Trust and the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), are lining up in resistance to such massive and dangerous proposals. The government, however, says it will crush any opposition to its radical reforms. It's hard to see how such draconian measures can be put forward, when only recently the concepts of 'localism' were set out. It is also disturbing to note that some of George Osborn's main advisors come from our largest building companies. Will their voice be heard above all others ?

The new guidelines aim to stimulate growth in the economy which, as we are all aware, is bouncing along the bottom of the growth rate. The question arises about using development programmes in order to create jobs and thus stimulate the economy. This is not a new idea; it's one of the oldest. So – where do we stand in all this and where do we go from here ?

Of course there have to be development programmes. Greg Clark said only a year or so ago, said that where possible building should take place on 'brown field sites' and also that green spaces should be protected – if possible.

Having just driven back from Cornwall, I am very aware of our lovely rural landscape. As one passes from county to another, the individual qualities of our gorgeous countryside implant themselves in the mind. Surely we agree that the English countryside is unique. It is our

greatest asset which much be protected, not just for the present, but also for future generations.

My hope is that the combined voices of English Heritage, the National Trust, CPRE and Civic Voice will be able to curb the government’s aggressive attitude on this issue, and that rural England will not be used as a short-time stimulus to kick-start the economy.

Surely the government would be better serving the country by putting its energy into sustainable development and green technology which we all know is the way forward.

A.V.Wiltshire
Chairman

GATEWAY TO OTFORD ?

Is there some sign of hope for tackling Otford’s traffic problems? Maybe there is.

Parish Plan groups have been working to turn residents’ concerns into ideas for action, including plans for village “gateways” to be installed over the coming months at the main entry points to Otford, initially on Shoreham Road and Pilgrims Way West maybe. These will act as a highly visible sign to drivers that they are entering a residential village area.

Funding is difficult especially at the moment: Kent Highways tell us that funds for new schemes are very limited – despite their own frightening evidence on traffic speeds, as analysed by Derek Buck.

However, the Otford Society is contributing £500, as is the Otford Fete Committee. We are very grateful to our County Councillor, Nick Chard, and to District Councillor Michelle Lowe for providing or bidding for funds. John Edwards-Winser (Parish Council Chairman) has engaged the support and collaboration of our Parish Council, and this fresh and positive approach is really welcome.



*This drawing gives an idea of a gateway
It is not the actual design*

Later other measures to calm traffic and help pedestrians will be needed such as characterful signage for the Conservation Area, maybe a pedestrian crossing if funds permit, tackling High Street traffic, and anything that residents can do to make main-road

frontages and verges look attractive and “people-based”. The village Speedwatch team will be trained over the next month, so please be ready to see them around on our roads in the pursuit of safer roads for all. The Sevenoaks Chronicle will feature all this shortly.

Meanwhile a very big thank you to colleagues in the Parish Plan teams and elsewhere for helping things to start moving – so to speak!

STOP PRESS: VOTE FOR MONEY FOR OTFORD!

You can easily help to give Otford a great chance of winning up to £6000 for Otford’s traffic-calming measures – especially gateways – by going to this website:

<http://communityforce.natwest.com/project/3450> - after 29 September and voting for Otford’s project, which you will find described there.

Another link to the Otford Project is via <http://goo.gl/R74OF>

Jeff Lee

MICHELLE LOWE - OUR DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

The New Big Community Fund

You will be delighted to hear that despite the current economic climate, your district council has managed to find a way to launch our new Big Community Fund to help local groups.

The Fund will support local groups across the District in making improvements to how their areas look or how their community works together. It can also be used by groups who support members of the community who need more help to make an area feel safer.

Each application can be for up to £3,000 and has to be made by either John Edwards-Winser or me as your District Councillors. Each month £10,000 of the community fund is made available for councillors to bid for. We will be up against bids from across the District each time, but if we make a good case for the money we can hope to win many of our bids, and if not we can always try again the following month. John, the Otford Parish Plan Highways and Walkways Group and I have bid in September (the first month of the community fund being made available) for £1500 for a village gateway. Fingers crossed that we are successful. Do let John or I know if there are any other projects that you would like one or both of us to bid for.



No doubt you will have seen the press coverage and campaigns by organisations such as the National Trust about the Government's new planning rules. I know that this will cause a lot of anxiety in Otford as we fear yet more infill and threats to our precious greenbelt land that surrounds our village.

Sevenoaks District Council has made sure that we have had our own planning document approved by the government in good time, which means as a council we have identified how we can build the homes that we will need over the next 10 years without touching any greenbelt land. It may not be ideal, but we are doing our best to protect not only our countryside but our villages as well. In Otford we also have our Village Design Statement that acts as supplementary planning guidance and has been used more than once to help protect our village from inappropriate development on the Development Control Committee.

I am very grateful for the work that the Parish Council, the Otford Society and the Parish Plan working groups do for our village and how they support me and the work that I do to try and make Otford an even better place to live and work.

To keep you up-to-date with everything that the District Council is doing for you - the people of Otford, I have launched a new website that I update a few times a week. The website keeps you up-to-date with everything from when and how yellow lines will be painted to every step in the process of a contentious planning application. It gives you the chance to comment on each blog which gives me valuable feedback about what you think about what I am doing on your behalf. You can visit the site at: <http://michellelowe.yourcldr.com> Do log on and let me know what you think.

Michelle Lowe

Sevenoaks District Council Member for Otford & Shoreham

Email: Cllr.Lowe@Sevenoaks.gov.uk Website: <http://michellelowe.yourcldr.com>

PLEASE USE YOUR LOCAL SHOPS !

Oxford received the prestigious Village of the Year award in 2002 – no idle boast, but maintaining such a claim requires effort and dedication by the whole community. Our shops are the key to receiving a similar award in the future and with so many super stores within five miles of our village it is essential that we support them as much as possible.

For a village of our size we are fortunate in having a number of one-off designer outlets – in fact we have regular visitors from outside Oxford who come for that reason alone. Don't allow our High Street to become a collection of boarded-up outlets. Take the opportunity to walk around and see what is on offer, pop in and talk to the friendly owners, and you will be amazed and what is available to you without the need to get in the car and drive to another town.

Local shops make our village more desirable, and they won't close if we keep using them.

Scenes from Oxford Shops Special Christmas Opening 2010



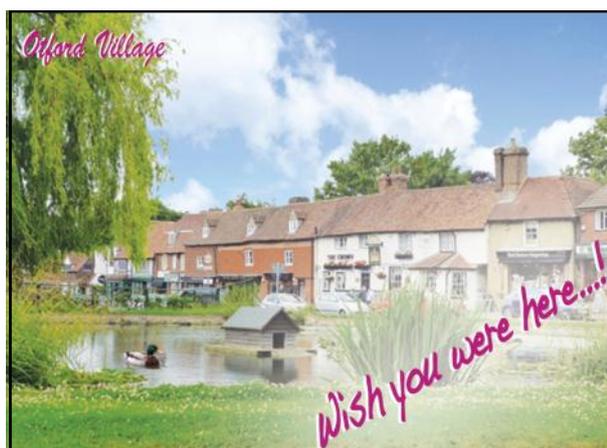
Mad Hatters



Mille Fleurs

Christmas Opening - on **Sunday 27th November 11am - 4pm**. Come and enjoy the seasonal festivities in Oxford. All the shops and pubs will be open + street entertainment, carol singing, Father Christmas, mince pies, mulled wine and much, much more. It's the perfect way to do your Christmas shopping locally.

We are shortly to embark on a marketing campaign using the following postcard – look out for this in magazines and local shops. Please help us by passing this on to family and friends to encourage them to visit Oxford. There is a new website – www.OxfordShopping.co.uk



AND TALKING ABOUT SHOPS ...

Here - in an occasional series - are photographs of some of our shops, as they were in years gone by. This time - Bubblestone Parade. How many of you remember it looking like this ?



Wartime



In the 1950s



Late 1960s



1977

Many thanks to Ed Thompson for the photographs from his collection

THE COMMUNITY HERITAGE ORCHARD

Otford's Parish Plan is now published and various groups of volunteers are coming together to investigate and gather information to enable some of the hopes for the future to happen. One of these is to make Palace Field a more interesting area. A small part of the field, with the help of a volunteer, has been encouraging more wild flowers. It is hoped that some sheep will graze the top meadow, which was once the central courtyard of the Archbishop's Palace. It is highly probable that sheep grazed this particular area in Medieval and Tudor times rather than it have to be cut with single handed shears. A licence will have to be obtained from English Heritage for this to happen. The Otford Society together with the Committee of RADIO wish to fund some trees for a Community Orchard in Palace Field, as part of the village enhancement project - this will also need a licence.



But it is hoped that the whole scheme with the various aims can be achieved in one overall licence. The land to the west of the stream and west of the tarmac path was once the garden of the Palace. The Fete Committee have also agreed to give £500 towards the project.

A visit was made to Brogdale, at Faversham, where one can see the largest collection of fruit trees in the world. Our project was explained to one of their advisors, who was extremely helpful. After receiving a great deal of advice a short list was made and then we were taken

by a very experienced guide to see the chosen trees and taste the fruits of our selection. For the moment 8 trees have been reserved.

Discussion has taken place with the Property Manager at SDC who gave his verbal permission for the project providing the necessary English Heritage licence/s obtained. The Parish Council has supported the project so far. Two new information boards replace the original ones and details for these is still being investigated and will have to have the necessary approval before they can be manufactured and installed. It is hoped that more wild flowers can be introduced including those that would thrive in the wet conditions of the stream and its banks.

We hope this whole scheme will enhance our heritage for the future.

SAINSBURY'S ON OUR DOORSTEP

Over the past year, the Society has been very pro-active on your behalf in seeking to influence the various Sainsbury store-enlargement applications. We can all see work progressing on the site and this seems a good opportunity to update Otford Society members as to the current status as far as we know it.

The two illustrations show the two alternative proposals that Sainsbury have submitted.

The first, which was approved, incorporated a single storey car deck across the whole of the frontage. We argued long and hard against this proposal and against the enormous expanse of window that was proposed. Quite apart from the design which was completely out-of-context



*Indicative view of permitted store front design
(with car park deck)*

with its rural location, our concerns were that the light emitting from the frontage would act like a beacon shining toward Otford. Both we and the Parish Council, putting our arguments in Chamber at the hearing, at least succeeded in gaining an assurance from Sainsbury that they would use a form of glass which reduced its light-emitting qualities. Because of the technicalities of the application, we were unable to have much other influence

We do find ourselves – with the Otford Parish Council – often fighting a lone battle however. Because

Sainsbury faces away from Sevenoaks and is on the far edge of its boundary, it has little effect upon Sevenoaks residents. But rest assured the Otford Society will continue to do its utmost to protect the interests of our rural village from the urbanisation on our parish boundary. Because of the technicalities of the application, we were unable to have much other influence upon the unsuitability of the urban design

Two months ago however, Sainsbury invited representatives of the Parish Council and the Otford Society to an informal discussion on a new proposal that they wished to make. This is the second design that is illustrated. The raised car park had disappeared but a new frontage had replaced the former. The Society submitted a very clear summary of our thoughts and recommendations on this 'revised' proposal. Sainsbury have now submitted their new design for approval by SDC planning but a decision has not yet been made. Your parish Council have made very clear our (mutual) objections and we can only hope that these will be taken into consideration by the planning officer. Sainsbury's are already talking about a November re-launch.

So what are our main areas of concern? We feel that the timber cladding on the frontage is

entirely unsuitable and in no way reflects the local vernacular. It gives the design more of an appearance of an airport terminal. The illustrations do not show that in reality you will see a lot of the existing terra cotta tiling above the store frontage and it would seem natural that this local colouration and material also be incorporated in the design.



Indicative view of proposed revised store front design (without car park deck)

The expanse of new wall which will now be sited much closer to the A225 (Sevenoaks Road) is of white panels. We have strongly recommended that these are in grey or more neutral colour to reduce their dominance so close to the road.

The proposed car park is entirely barren and we have recommended the introduction of trees and shrub containers to break-up what appears a tarmac wasteland. There is even concern now being expressed whether in fact there will be sufficient parking-space with all this building extension. The Parish Council, in their formal response, have also expressed concern whether the shrubs and trees being proposed will properly do the job of shrouding the building from the road.

We do find ourselves – with the Otford Parish Council – often fighting a lone battle however. Because Sainsbury faces away from Sevenoaks and is on the far edge of its boundary, it has little effect upon Sevenoaks residents. But rest assured the Otford Society will continue to do its utmost to protect the interests of our rural village from the urbanisation on our parish boundary

Rod Shelton

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHRISTMAS MARKET will take place in the Church Centre on Saturday 19th November from 10.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon.

Stalls will include: gift wrapping; cards; Christmas tree and table decorations; candles; cakes; winter woollies (scarves, gloves, hats etc.); Christmas sweets and chocolates. A super Christmas raffle is also planned.

There will be “Pick a present from the tree” for children, and while we appreciate that Santa Claus is extra busy, he has again promised to send a deputy! Coffee, tea and soft drinks, together with Christmas biscuits, Stollen and mince pies, will be on sale. What is urgently needed now is items with which to stock the stalls. All contributions will be most gratefully received, and may be left at the Church Office, at any church service, at ‘Burway’, Sevenoaks Road, or at 34 Dartford Road, Sevenoaks. For any queries or offers of help, please contact Sylvia Grafton on 01732 452117.



Dates for your Diary

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| 12 November 2011 | Remembrance Sunday |
| 29 March 2012 | Otford Society AGM |
| 7 July 2012 | Otford Society Garden Party |
| 18 October 2012 | Otford Society Autumn Meeting |

HOSPICES OF HOPE - EVENTS



hospicesofhope
making every day count

Quiz Night

Take on another challenge with our Quiz Master !
Saturday 8 October in the Otford Tea Rooms & Gift Shop at 7.00pm
Tickets £12 per person Supper is included.
Contact wendy@hospicesofhope.co.uk 01959 525110

Cameo Opera

This is back by popular demand !
An evening of exceptional entertainment by Cameo Opera and the Robert Reid Duo
Friday 14 October at the Royal Wells Hotel, Tunbridge Wells at 7.30pm
Tickets £40 per person. Black tie, 2 course dinner.
Contact vanessa@hospicesofhope.co.uk 07866 495628

Fashion Show

What more could a lady want ? With a drink on arrival, the opportunity to shop, to sit back and enjoy a catwalk show and be pampered with mini beauty treatments from Aveda and Mary Kay Cosmetics.
Friday 21 October at Christchurch, Tunbridge Wells from 7pm – 10pm
Tickets £7 per person. Treatments £5 each (pre booking and pre payment required)
Tickets available from wendy@hospicesofhope.co.uk 01959 525110

Hospices of Hope Charity Shops in Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Otford
Christchurch, Tunbridge Wells Café or Office – 01892 522323
operations@christchurchtunbridgewells.org

Membership

The membership is fairly stable with some new members being recruited by the Liaison Officers replacing the residents who leave the area. Could those Officers who have not given me their 2011 subscriptions yet, please do so, as the Treasurer needs to have these before November to be able to prepare the accounts for auditing. Also could members please assist the Liaison Officers if they call for your subscriptions when you are not at home. If they leave a note asking you to send them your subscription, please could you endeavour to do so, to save them calling on you again?

We are currently reviewing our Postal Membership Subscriptions for next year and now no longer offer Life Membership.

We still need a Liaison Officer for the Pilgrims Way East area. Would it be possible for someone to do St. Michaels Drive? There are only a few Newsletters to deliver per year, plus collection of the member's subscriptions. I look forward to hearing from anyone who can help.

Vincent Tilley Membership Secretary

Subscription Rates

Adult (Single)	£4	Retired Single	£2
Adult (Couple)	£5	Retired Couple	£3

Next Otford Society Newsletter – March 2012

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