

Welcome to you all and especially to Tim Jones who has nobly offered to do the lion's share of Minutes for our meetings.

Before talking about TL, some comments on the most recent happenings in our town; 1. Firstly, all our congratulations to Hilary for a stupendous day on Saturday and let's hope that some people will be inspired to tackle problems differently.

2. Leach Grove: still no final decision. Tim looked at the Supreme Court's website, and there are 19 other cases awaiting judgement, whose hearings were before ours. Two of these cases had their judgements handed down on 16th October, so that leaves 17 still waiting.....

3. The ban on Fracking has come as good news to many, particularly in South M. V.

4. Our Councillor for N. L'd, Keira Vyvyan-Robinson wishes me to announce that there will be a Litter-Pick in in N. Ld on Sat. 16 Nov at 2 pm for 1 hr. starting at 2pm at The Bridge next to the Kingston Rd. Rec. Tools provided.

5. From the Surrey Hills Organisation: As a central proposition, they are looking into strengthening the purposes, powers and resources of the AONBs and to re-naming them as National Landscapes. This is to ensure that the benefits of AONB designation are maximised.

MV choice of 3 areas for cost cutting – Martyn will speak on these

And now to the latest from Transform Leatherhead. I went to 3 of the 4 "Conversations," as they were called and I must admit that overall I was rather shocked if not horrified. Roads first:

We have a gyratory system in this town and, although deficient in some aspects at some times, compared with other towns, it works reasonably well most of the time. We have a park which, although not a Kew Gardens, is a green open space in the middle of the town and is home to casual games of cricket or football throughout the year. It is also an alfresco dining area for many office workers when it is not too cold. There is a children's playground and an exercise circuit, both low key, and available to anyone who would wish to use them.

IN COMPARISON WITH THIS PERFECTLY ACCEPTABLE, CURRENT ARRANGEMENT, TRANSFORM PROPOSE TO CLOSE BULL HILL BETWEEN THE MARKS AND SPENCER GARAGE AND LIDL AND, INSTEAD, TO DRIVE A NEW ROAD THROUGH THE PARK PARALLEL TO AND ADJACENT TO THE RAILWAY LINE. WHATS LEFT OF THE PARK AFTER THEY HAVE DONE THIS WILL BE COVERED BY THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOME 450 FLATS. THE OVERBEARING CLAIRE/JAMES HOUSE ONLY PROPOSES THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOME 40 FLATS. THE PARK WILL HAVE TO ACCOMMODATE 11X THAT NUMBER!

There are also plans to re-route the path from the station that leads to North Street so that it finishes opposite Leret Way. This is uphill from North Street and will be very difficult for many people. Now **Parking**:

The PROPOSAL to REMOVE parking in the High Street IS BASED ON A 75% MAJORITY OF A TRANSFORM SURVEY THAT ONLY RECEIVED APPROX 300 RESPONSES. YET THE PETITION FOR AN EXTENSION OF HIGH STREET PARKING HOURS, ORGANISED BY ONE OF OUR MEMBERS, WAS SIGNED BY AROUND 100 BUSINESSES AND 1200 RESIDENTS. HOW PERVERSE CAN IT BE TO FAVOUR A PROPOSAL SUPPORTED BY about 230+ nameless people (NO NAMES/ADDRESSES WERE ASKED FOR), over that supported and signed by 1300 PEOPLE all of whom live and work in Leatherhead?

Turning now to the town itself, or, in modern parlance, "The Shopping Experience:" the plans that were first put forward in 2015-16 indicated a focus on "larger high street names". Many people greeted this enthusiastically and so the Planners tried to encompass that sort of thing. But, then came the dramatic downturn in retail and much that had appeared on the Artist's impression photos had to be shelved and the focus for retail has now fallen on the Swan Centre only.

At first sight, I had thought that the ideas for the Swan Centre seemed MORE SENSIBLE, but further thought and examination has revealed, as I see it, some major flaws: To completely eradicate the shop currently called Book Potato (so as to widen the ALREADY WIDE ENTRANCE TO THE MALL), and to shorten all the other SHOPS from there up to Next would seem, to me, to be throwing away a great deal of VALUABLE RETAIL SPACE FOR THE PROBLEMATIC and uncertain BENEFIT THAT THE SMALLER UNITS THEREBY CREATED MIGHT offer.

We need smaller units for SMALL or START-UP RETAILERS but surely not at the expense of bigger ones. A MULTI-SCREEN cinema would appear to have some merit, but could hardly be housed in Boots Opticians AS INDICATED in the plans. IT MIGHT HOUSE THE ENTRANCE BUT WHERE ARE THE SCREENS TO GO?

Another idea being shown in the ARTIST'S IMPRESSIONS, is that of a MEDIUM class hotel. It is SHOWN LOCATED IN THE AREA BETWEEN THE FACE OF THE MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK AND LERET WAY. THERE IS SIMPLY NOT enough width IN THIS LOCATION TO ACCOMMODATE A HOTEL and the view on to Leret Way is hardly attractive.

Not very clearly shown on these IMPRESSIONS is the addition of further housing on the northern side of the car park, over Sainsbury's and over the current Fairfield Centre. FINALLY IT IS APPARENTLY CONSIDERED FEASIBLE TO CONTEMPLATE ADDING EXTRA FLOORS OF PARKING TO THE EXISTING MULTI-STOREY which in turn, would be topped by Leatherhead's very own high-level vineyard. (The immediate question is "Would this happen while the car park etc. is still OPERATING OR Would IT BE SHUT FOR THE 18 MONTHS THAT IT WOULD TAKE TO BUILD ??)

And, finally, the elephant in the room: Money! L.E.P. (Local Enterprise Partnership) has contributed to the costs involved in the surveys and consultants but any actual construction work would have to be met by the private sector. In other words, the only way to really improve the town is to build and sell on a very large number of flats in the Red House Grounds. We might retain a small square of grass in the middle of the park but most of the trees (planted only about 10 years ago) plus the general openness would have been sacrificed.

I find this hard to stomach.