

PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC – PETITION FOR THE REGENERATION OF NEW ASH GREEN VILLAGE CENTRE

Council – 21 July 2015

Report of Chief Officer Legal & Governance

Status: For Decision

Key Decision: No

Contact Officer Christine Nuttall Ext. 7245

Recommendation to Council:

That, in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme, the Council consider the petition submitted by Councillor Cameron Clark and the Lead Petitioner, Victoria Barnard, on 18 June 2015 and determine any action that it wishes to take in response.

Introduction and Background

1 Councillor Cameron Clark and the Lead Petitioner, Victoria Barnard, have submitted a petition with 1,550 signatures in the following terms:

“We, the undersigned, call upon Sevenoaks District Council to take a more active role in ensuring the current landowners (Piperton Finance, Gable Holt Ltd and the Co-operative Society Ltd) bring New Ash Green Village Centre up to an acceptable standard (details of major issues listed below):

- Upper Street South: semi derelict appearance of the walkways/paving slabs/empty units. Rat traps left for 2+ years without being changed/removed, rats living in empty units with pest control not carried out regularly. Trees/plants growing where they shouldn't be. Bridge over Link in very poor condition, stairs and railings covered in pigeon droppings.
- Upper Street North: derelict, evident damage caused by water, damaged windows, walkways/paving slabs in a bad state, pigeons living/breeding inside the empty units (with many dead pigeons inside empty units and the floors thick with pigeon droppings), empty units not boarded up properly (being constantly ripped down by vandals), broken cladding, barbed wire hanging down, unsightly boarding, woodwork rotting, inside of the units in a derelict state.
- The Row: Many empty units which cannot be filled due to the derelict state of the interiors. Landowners will not spend money to bring them up to standard for tenants to move in. Security shutters dirty and unsightly. Rats have been seen. Pigeons roosting above shops, anti-pigeon spikes do nothing to deter them. Pigeons now laying eggs and breeding above shops. Canopies either

filthy or missing, clock tower flaking paint. Bus stop in centre inhabited by rats. Boarded up toilets and doors near the bus stop. Overall appearance of the centre downstairs (most of upstairs is not accessible) is neglected and derelict/borderline derelict.

The neglect and lack of care and maintenance over a number of years in the village centre has reached its limit and cannot be allowed to deteriorate any longer.

The residents of Upper Street South, the village shop owners and the residents of New Ash Green are not prepared to tolerate the neglect and derelict appearance of the centre. It is affecting home owners and shop owners alike.

We urge the council to ensure the landowners make the necessary improvements and regenerate the village centre as a matter of urgency.

We urge the council to take urgent steps towards making sure the landowners achieve this so the village centre is brought back to an acceptable standard so it can thrive for the local community.”

The Council's Petition Scheme

- 2 The Council's Petitions Scheme provides for petitions containing more than 1,000 signatures to be debated at full Council and also that petitions which relate to an issue which affects a particular area of the District and have a significant level of support from people who live, work or study in that area are also likely to be debated at a full Council meeting.
- 3 The Council can take whatever action it deems appropriate to respond to the petition which could include referring the petition to Cabinet or any council committee, to commission further investigation or to take no action at all for reasons put forward in the debate.

Key Implications

Financial

The financial implications would depend upon the action to be taken.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

None

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users at this stage.

Conclusions

The Council is asked to consider the petition and to determine what action it wishes to take in response.

Appendices

None

Background Papers:

[Sevenoaks District Council Constitution](#): Appendix Y -
Petition Scheme

Covering letters to petition to Sevenoaks District Council – petition for the Regeneration of New Ash Green Village Centre (rest of petition being exempt from publication under the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A Paragraph 1 (Information relating to any individual))

Christine Nuttall
Chief Officer for Legal and Governance