



Ashtead Independents

Keep national party politics out of local government

NOT MUCH ENTHUSIASM IN ASHTEAD TO PROTECT THE COUNTRYSIDE?

27th January 2022 by admin

Ashtead residents appear to have been slow in coming forward to present their views on the extension of the Surrey Hill's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

With less than a week to go to put views forward to Natural England, Ashtead Independent Councillor David Harper raised concerns saying, "I know that many in Ashtead are passionate about the countryside, so I'm concerned that so few appear to have submitted their views and photographs to Natural England to support the possible extension of the Surrey Hill's AONB to Ashtead.

"On the face of it there appears to be not much enthusiasm in Ashtead to protect the countryside, but I and my fellow Ashtead Independent Councillors know that the exact opposite is true with many being passionate about preserving our rural heritage."

Given that the consultation ends on the 29th January Cllr Harper decided to alert residents as many have previously expressed interest to the Independent Councillors in preserving the countryside while many have also raised concern about building new homes in the Green Belt.

The Ashtead Independents pointed out that extending the Surrey Hills AONB would put a higher level of protection on the countryside additional to that from Green Belt designation as it takes into account the ecology, dark skies, and landscape. The boundary can only be moved by a AONB boundary review (last one 60 years ago); not through a Local Plan.

There has been an AONB in Surrey for over 60 years, and the last boundary review was 1956. Last year Natural England started work with Surrey Hills to review the boundaries. As part of that review there is engagement with residents to hear their views of the area – and that means all of us!

This is especially important as the review is actively considering areas to the north of the existing AONB – including Ashtead and Leatherhead. Review Area EA7 (see map below): Downland landscape between Leatherhead and Chipstead – is looking at the rolling Surrey hills, much of which is on chalkland which has extremely rare, unique, and diverse features and is also visited and enjoyed by thousands of residents.

Cllr Harper said, "If you feel this area is precious and needs to be preserved then this is your chance to share your pictures and feelings! But don't delay! Closing date is Jan 31st this year".

<https://www.surrey-hills-aonb-boundary-review.org/>



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STILL WAITING FOR ELECTRIC CHARGING POINTS IN ASHTEAD

18th January 2022 by admin

Although provision for electric charging points was made in the original refurbishment plans for the Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall (APMH) Car Park in 2018, your independent Councillors are disappointed that there is still no firm date as to when these will be installed — despite the emphasis voiced by the current LibDem Administration on the climate emergency.

Independent Village Ward Councillor David Hawksworth said today (13 January):

“We understand that the feasibility study for charging points across the district have now been completed but we now want to see firm dates fixed for work at the Peace Memorial Hall car park — the busiest MVDC park in the Village. If the local authority is committed to a net zero position across its own properties by 2030, this needs action rather than words.

“That said, we were pleased to see that the Authority did again enhance our Christmas shopping experience in Ashtead when over the three Saturday’s preceding Christmas we had free parking all day — continuing the Independents’ original introduction of this facility for Christmas 2018. For continuing this, seasonal response, from MVDC, many residents and traders in the village were grateful,” said Cllr. Hawksworth.

Their concern to get more information regarding the installation schedule comes on top of the ongoing disappointment that there are now no plans to increase the number of free 30-minute parking bays — as originally envisaged in the refurbishment plans. This is especially pertinent as the Independents believe that an increase in the hourly parking charge is currently being debated.