

LOCAL ELECTIONS



Elections will be taking place on Thursday 4 May for all Canterbury City Council wards including our own St Stephen's Ward. As always, SSRA will be strictly neutral between the political parties and will not support any candidate.

There are however two important things to bring to your attention:

1. PHOTO I.D. NEEDED

New Government regulations require all voters to provide an approved form of photo ID when they vote, and you will not be allowed to vote without it.

Acceptable forms of photo ID include a driver's licence with photo, a passport, an older person's or disabled person's concessionary bus pass, Blue Badge and any PASS-accredited forms of photo ID.

Please note however that students' University ID cards are excluded by the regulations and will NOT be accepted at polling stations.

If you are a student or know students who want to vote, please share and circulate this information. And make sure that you take your own ID when you go to vote. If you are in doubt about the rules, go to:

<https://news.canterbury.gov.uk/news/main-item/voter-id-is-coming-to-districts-elections/>

2. HUSTINGS FOR ST STEPHEN'S WARD

With our friends in SMRARA, we are organising a 'hustings' meeting for St Stephen's Ward, to hear from the local candidates and put questions to them. The meeting will be on Tuesday 25th April at 7.30 pm in St Stephen's Church Hall. This date is at present provisional as the deadline for nominations for candidates was not until 4 April so we have not yet been able to check whether all candidates can attend on that date. We hope so, but please watch out for further details. And please do come to the meeting. We know from experience how important it is for us to have local councillors who can represent us well.

Be the first to find out what's happening in your neighbourhood

MY COMMUNITY VOICE is a messaging service that helps Kent and Medway residents, businesses, and community groups to keep in touch with their local policing teams. The service sends updates about your local area directly from the police officers themselves.

My Community Voice is more than just a messaging service; it allows you to reply to the alerts we send you, share information and tell us about the issues affecting you.

We are committed to engaging with communities to increase trust and confidence and to help protect people from harm. Police, partners and the public working together can build resilient and safe communities, and both reduce and prevent crime.

You will be able to play an active part in police appeals as well as keeping updated in what is happening in your local area.

Find out more here:
www.mycommunityvoicekent.co.uk

Report a crime

Report a non-urgent crime online www.kent.police.co.uk/report
Talk to us on live chat available 24/7 www.kent.police.co.uk/contact
In an emergency if crime is in progress or life is in danger call 999



The Riverside: A vibrant venue or another white elephant?

Depending on your point of view, the Canterbury City Council has been either unlucky or lacking in foresight with its investments and plans in recent years. Its acquisition of the White Friars development, was followed by a sharp decline in retail outlets, and thus rents, due to the increase in online shopping.

As some wit recently quipped: 'we used to go home for a cup of coffee after shopping, now, after shopping, we go out for a coffee.'

More recently, it has been revealed that the controversial multi-storey car park, erected in Station Road West, is the emptiest carpark in the city. It may take a long time to recoup the £9.1 million cost.

And now some claim to have sighted another pale pachyderm emerging from the undergrowth as the entertainment and catering complex, included in the Riverside Development, is nearing completion. This development consists of a multiplex cinema with a supporting cast of eateries and drinkeries, including a Boom Battle Bar (???), all gathered round a paved piazza.

While the finishing touches are applied and occupants sought for some still vacant premises, a question mark hangs over the projects viability, especially in these ever more challenging times.

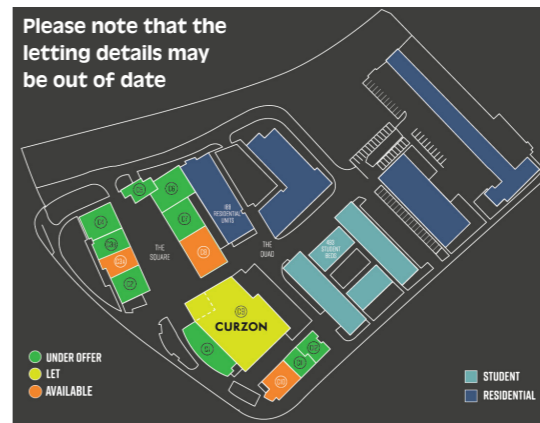
Will tumbleweed soon be blowing through the piazza or will it be a roaring success with a 3 AM conga of youth dancing and singing all the way home from the Riverside along St Stephens Road and up to the University Halls of Residence? Neither prospect seems very desirable.

Over the years our Residents Association have been part of a local consultation group that meets with the developers, Bouygues, which according to Bill and Ben is pronounced 'Bweeg.' Initially we questioned the nature of the development, as we were concerned about how the scheme failed to adequately address



Canterbury's housing needs and how it might worsen traffic congestion and pollution. Architecturally the plans did not appear very attractive or inspiring.

We failed to radically change the project but we did influence some modifications. For example, initially it was planned to build the accommodation, for all but



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500 students, in modular units. Would the student boom, we asked, survive the advent of more on-line learning and ever rising costs and debt faced by the young. We believed that it would be better for accommodation to be built in such a way that, if need be, it could be converted into flats for family or other

types of occupation. This we were told has been done.

We were also keen for the bus stop in Sturry Road to be in a layby so the flow of traffic at the roundabout would not be stalled every time the bus discharged and took on passengers. This has not been done on the advice of KCC Highways division on grounds that it would be more difficult for buses to exit a layby.

Currently our efforts regarding the development are channelled into three main areas: litter, licensing and landscape.

Yes, we are making an L of an effort.

Litter and fly tipping blight Canterbury and our otherwise lovely riverside. The Stour has become more accessible in recent years with the opening of more riverside paths. Unfortunately, this otherwise commendable improvement, has made it more accessible to those, both humans and seagulls, who wantonly discard litter. The failure to have introduced pre-emptive strategies has contributed to the sad, unkempt state of the riverside walk between Barton Mill and Asda. We do not want this to happen to the stretch beside the Riverside.

We would also like to see that concrete desert of a plaza softened and brightened and made more interesting by the addition some plants, shrubs and possibly a green wall. We were not impressed by the sad state of some of the trees planted on the green area adjacent to the Kingsmead Road and Bouygues have agreed to rectify this and extend the time for which they will be responsible for this area.

Though not keen on the idea of 3a.m. congas, we are keen to increase the possibility of people getting to and from the Riverside without a car by improving signage, footpaths, cycle routes, bus services and information about these.

We have also been keeping an eye on alcohol licensing hours applications and contesting them with some success where they appear excessive and inconsiderate.

Whether we wanted it or not the Riverside is with us and is likely to be so for many years. It is in all our interests for it to thrive but in such a way that is good both for the new residents and businesses and for the existing neighbouring community.

That is why we will continue to go down by the Riverside but won't lay down our arms but continue to press for improvements that should help make it a better place in which to live, a better place to visit and a better place to run a business.