



## Leatherhead *AHEAD*

**Moving our town forward together**

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Mr Colin Langley  
Leatherhead Tomorrow

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Dear Colin

At our committee meeting on Wednesday, 25 July, *LeatherheadAhead* reviewed and discussed the proposed plans covering the redesign of Church Street.

We came to the conclusion that **neither** of the proposed designs would enhance nor benefit the town of Leatherhead, and that more information was in any case required in order that cost/benefit analysis could be undertaken.

Our main concerns regarding the Plans are as follows:

- The main shopping facilities left in the town lie in and off the High Street, and shoppers therefore need to be encouraged to enter into the Town. Both proposed schemes would make access to the Town look even more restricted, emphasizing yet again the “Fortress Leatherhead” concept. This is particularly the case where the town approach is through the two lines of planted trees.
- Short term parking is seriously reduced in one scheme – and Leatherhead cannot afford to lose any parking of this nature – and made much more difficult in the other. The proposed ‘nose to kerb’ type parking is, to say the least, potentially hazardous, particularly as it is located near to the traffic lights on Church Street and to the ingress/egress point to the Church Street car park. The number of vehicles at this point would make reversing in or out of what appear to be tight parking spaces very difficult indeed.
- Taking away 5/6 parking spaces is the equivalent of taking away the existing parking spaces outside Englishman’s Castle. These spaces, which took ages to obtain, have only been there for about 2 years, and are very well used. Furthermore, it is no longer possible to park in the High Street until almost all of the shops are shut, which means that we have already lost a considerable amount of the ‘pop and shop’ parking we used to have.
- The piazza type layout in front of the Theatre might look very nice in plan, but even in an average English summer, it is doubtful if it would ever be utilized for more than 6 months of the year. Like the wrought iron step feature in the Town, and its predecessor ‘a public space’ with a bandstand, it is likely to become an area of neglect and vandalism.
- The paving work involved looks potentially expensive to purchase, and, judging from previous projects undertaken in the Town, will take a considerable period of time to put in place. We are of the opinion that the trading economy of the Town remains fragile, and would suffer very adversely from a long period of disruption caused by construction works at this location.
- In both the Phase 1 (High Street) and Phase 2 (ramp and corner where High Street meets Church Street) it has been shown that expensive paving stones do not work with traffic, therefore, surely only tarmac, as in normal streets, should be used when resurfacing Church Street. The lights put down in Phase 2 have never been successful, and therefore presumably more lights in the road should be avoided.

We now understand that, in September, the plan with reduced parking is being put forward to the Local Committee.

The Healthcheck was undertaken as a means of finding out what the people who use Leatherhead wanted for the town, and therefore future projects should reflect their wishes. After wide ranging consultations, the Leatherhead Tomorrow report actually says, in many places, that people wanted **more** 'pop and shop' parking spaces (eg. "All the questionnaires, surveys and discussions have called for more parking, free or cheaper parking, and the opportunity for half hour 'pop and shop' parking"), and in fact objective TA5.4 states "To work with Mole Valley District Council to provide more free 'pop and shop' parking especially close to the centre with Leret Way being one possible location".

**We therefore ask why a plan that takes away 5/6 parking spaces was even put forward as a suggestion?**

We also ask why there was no proposal put forward that would mainly keep what we have already in Church Street, but would improve the appearance of the area? There is already an area outside the Theatre for putting out tables and chairs, which could be used for an outside performance - this area could be made more attractive and the area outside Barclays Bank could be incorporated into the space to make it larger. At least two more free on-street parking spaces could be made available - ie. Extending the parking space available outside the children's bed shop, and removing a bit of paving and the bollards outside the old Lloyds/TSB bank. A few improvements will cost a lot less and will be much less disruptive.

Not enough information has yet been given to the Town residents which would enable them to arrive at a balanced decision regarding either of these two redesign proposals. For example:

- What are the measurable benefits to the Town of these proposals, apart from benefiting the Theatre?
- What is the total project going to cost?
- Is funding secured, and if so, from what source?
- When will work start and finish?
- During the work period, what alternative arrangements will be made to cover short and longer term parking, and access to the town for delivery vehicles, shoppers and diners?

Leatherhead*Ahead* remains as anxious as ever to see the Town progress and prosper, and have been very supportive of the work undertaken by the Leatherhead Tomorrow team. However, we do have very real concerns about the redesign proposals put forward for Church Street and hope that answers to some of the questions we have posed will allay them and enable us to re-evaluate our decision not to support the current proposals.

Yours sincerely

Paula Sabine  
Chairman  
Leatherhead *AHEAD*

cc. Leatherhead and MVDC councilors, Local committee members, Geoff Wallace (SCC),  
Leatherhead Society, Leatherhead Residents Association, Darren Mepham (CEO, MVDC),  
Sir Paul Beresford MP, Leatherhead Advertiser, Surrey Advertiser