

# ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

## Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Area Action Plan and Allocations DPD - 8 June 2009

### Question 1

#### THE VISION

The Borough Council's overall vision for the Borough of Tunbridge Wells is to enhance the quality of life for all our communities, which can be captured in four words: "Prosperous"; "Green"; "Healthy"; and "Confident" (TWBC Vision 2026). More specifically, the Council's "Vision 2026" is that **Royal Tunbridge Wells** will be "the best town centre in the South East to live, work and visit supported by the thriving centres of Paddock Wood, Southborough and Cranbrook".

The broad vision for **Royal Tunbridge Wells** itself, as set out within the submission version of the Core Strategy (2009), is that, by 2026, it will be a place of economic and social prosperity founded on seized opportunities for business and enterprise and a respect for the exceptional quality of the environment that makes the Borough unique. **Royal Tunbridge Wells** should be a centre of strategic importance in the South East: a Regional Hub of economic, social and cultural activity. Infrastructure improvements and increased use of high quality public transport, cycling and walking facilities will significantly reduce traffic congestion in and around the town.

**Royal Tunbridge Wells** will be a desirable place to live and will benefit from new housing development that meets the needs of the population in terms of type, size and cost. The provision of a wider range of higher-skilled employment opportunities inside the Borough, particularly within **Royal Tunbridge Wells** will see a reduction in out-commuting, while retail expansion and the provision of leisure and cultural facilities will secure the competitiveness of the town. The high quality of the built and natural environment and easy access to the countryside continue to appeal to residents and, in addition to the wide range of facilities in town and local neighbourhood centres provide essential services and a focus for local communities.

Do you think anything further should be added to the above Vision for Royal Tunbridge Wells?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please specify.

The detailed vision of RTW Town Forum members is reflected in the RTW Town Forum Presentation of 26 March 2009 (to the Leader of the Council, Senior Officers and members)

- <http://www.townforum.org.uk/planning/rtwmasterplan-rtwtf260309.pdf> ;

The Town Forum looked at issues from north to south ('Central Spine') for inclusion in the 'new Master Plan for Royal Tunbridge Wells'.

Far more importance should be brought to 'Social Engineering' – due to the uncontrolled social influence created by the unregulated private sector 'letting industry' letting a big part of the town's centre to an unknown and mostly unquantifiable transient population. The Council must understand what actually constitutes the residential population and reflect that in policies governing not only 'new-build' (including conversions) but also the letting industry.

## Question 2a

How should the best of the existing character of Royal Tunbridge Wells be conserved?

**No – to conversions of front garden into car parking spaces  
as submitted to the Local Economy & Housing Select Committee 15 January 2009  
- <http://www.townforum.org.uk/community/frontgardensparking-leh150109.pdf>**

**No – to removal of hedges, fences, walls**

**No – to satellite dishes (esp. multiple) on front elevations of properties, in particular those in conservation areas or those that are listed**

**No – to letting/sale boards being splattered around the town on properties, in particular those in conservation areas or that are listed; in other areas when only one board is required**

**No – to motorway lampposts at Mount Pleasant or other inappropriate positions**

**Character is conserved by finding solutions to the problems in front/rear patios, alleys etc, as raised at the RTW Town Forum meeting 26 March 2009**

**- <http://www.townforum.org.uk/community/rtwpatiosalleysproblems-rtwtf260309.pdf>**

## Question 2b

Are there any particular areas of the town or its surroundings that should be preserved or improved?

**Referring to Map 2 (RTW Town Centre)**

**– an area of preserving / improving is Trinity / Trinity Garden and Environs and**

**– improvement would be required on the Fiveways area and Calverley Precinct.**

**(see RTW TF presentation 26 March 2009)**

**Seek improvement of front gardens/patios in the town centre;  
established car parks should get landscape treatments.**

## Question 3

### THE OBJECTIVES FOR ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS

- To enhance the town's natural and built assets while planning for and accommodating future regeneration and growth
- To ensure a high quality built environment through a pro-active approach towards good design in new development and a high standard in the public realm
- To increase the amount, range and quality of housing, retail and employment floor space consistent with enhancing the character of Royal Tunbridge Wells
- To regenerate the vacant, derelict and rundown sites that currently spoil the town centre and surrounding areas
- To provide sustainable transport options for residents, workers and visitors that reduce congestion, minimise air pollution and energy use

Do you agree with the objectives set out for Royal Tunbridge Wells?

- Yes
- **No**

If you consider that different or additional objectives are important for Royal Tunbridge Wells, please specify.

The RTW Town Forum's Aims and Objectives are reflected in:

- <http://www.townforum.org.uk/administration/aimsobjectives-poster120308.pdf>

RTW Town Centre has to become more pedestrian friendly and look more striking for pedestrians

( more trees, better floral display in the precinct's containers, decorative roundabouts, benches, less visible commercial refuse bins, better integration of residential refuse bins [not only in front of the ground floor flat], heritage-style lampposts instead of motorway lampposts, no tarmac patched brick pavement - generally reduce street clutter )

To ensure that all planning incorporates adequate facilities for the Youth.

There must be adequate Elderly accommodation in and around the town for the elderly to have ease of access.

#### Question 4

Do you think that there should be better linkages between the north and south parts of the town, i.e. between the Royal Victoria Place/Camden Road area and the High Street/Pantiles area?

- Yes
- No

If yes, how do you think this could be achieved?

Referring to Map 2 (RTW Town Centre) the town centre should be seen as a 'vibrant 'spine'. This is only feasible by making it more pedestrian friendly; bus routes 281/277 have to pass through the High Street to encourage shopping.

#### Question 5

We are aware that there are transport problems within and around Royal Tunbridge Wells, with some routes suffering from congestion.

What do you think would help solve the transport problems within and around Royal Tunbridge Wells?

Create the town more pedestrian and shopper-friendly (refer to points made to Q.3 & Q.4);  
– Avoid that RTW is a town which is only used to drive through.  
– Attain more active co-operation with Kent County Council Highways and a full review of turning priorities within and around town and its outskirts.

#### Question 6

There are a number of attractive green spaces in Royal Tunbridge Wells (including Calverley Park, Dunorlan Park and the Common).

How do you think these could be better linked to the town centre?

Future footpaths and cycle ways (in the parks or to link the parks/green spaces) should be permeable and NOT asphalted.

These green spaces would need better promotion than to be a place *only* for dog owners; many people are put off by the perception of uncontrolled dogs and the unwanted excrement that many ignorant owners still leave behind.

**The Common needs safer crossings (London Road, Major York Road).**

**Improved signage to all parks.**

### **Question 7**

#### **THE DRAFT ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN CENTRE BOUNDARY**

We have drawn up a draft Town Centre boundary for Royal Tunbridge Wells, which is illustrated on Map 2. This is the area to which new development for a mix of Town Centre uses would be directed in the future. It would also form the boundary of the area that will be covered by the TCAAP for Royal Tunbridge Wells. Site allocations outside this boundary will be made in the Allocations DPD.

Do you agree with the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre boundary shown on Map 02?

- Yes
- **No**

If no, do you think other buildings/roads should be included or excluded?

**Change the headline of Map 2 to: Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre - Area Action Plan to avoid misunderstanding that all land within the blue border is the RTW Town Centre**

### **Question 8**

#### **USES APPROPRIATE FOR ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS**

Uses considered to be appropriate for the Town Centre in particular are retail (both food and comparison retailing); offices; housing (including family housing and flats); and leisure (cafés, restaurants, etc). Outside the Town Centre, a number of uses are considered appropriate, including employment generating uses within the North Farm/Longfield Road Industrial Estate; local retail, community and recreational uses within the defined Neighbourhood Centres; and additional housing in existing residential/mixed use areas and new urban extensions.

The Core Strategy states that 70% of the Borough's total housing requirement will be met at Royal Tunbridge Wells and approximately 23,403sqm (net) of comparison (non-food) retail floorspace will be sought; employment floorspace will be maintained and encouraged, including offices in the town centre.

What type, and where, would you like to see further housing in Royal Tunbridge Wells?

**Previous town centre townhouses which were converted into offices should be brought back to residential use, preferably to their original purpose – family town houses. ( e.g. Monson Road, row of town houses – KM Messenger / Citizens Advice Bureau empty since last autumn! - they cannot stay empty until it is decided what will happen with the area around the Crescent Road Car Park; otherwise the area will develop slowly into further unwanted grot spots )**

**Sites like the former Cinema site – if the Town Hall / Crescent Road Car Park are coming forward for residential development – could be used for purpose-built office blocks (same for Morrison site, Merevale House etc)**

**Should Montague House in Hanover Street, the KCC Social Services branch, not be integrated into Gateway or into a new Town Hall and be re-converted into residential?**

### **Question 8a**

Where would you like to see additional retail development provided within the defined town centre?

**With the increasing internet usage to do shopping there is doubt that accurate data to prove the need for additional retail development exists.**

**No further retail development at Longfield; – reserve for light industrial and transfer to outside of town centre e.g. car repairs / MOT / van hiring (e.g. from Quarry Road to make space for residential in the St Barnabas area)**

### **Question 8b**

Where, and what type of new employment development would you like to see?

**Tourism, spa, college/university, arts & culture**

### **Question 9**

What other services and facilities (for example, education, health and community facilities) would you like to see more or less of within and around Royal Tunbridge Wells and in the town centre in particular? (Please see Map 01 and Map 02).

Within and around Royal Tunbridge Wells (Map 01).

**Conference Centre (due to changes to Assembly Hall)**

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre (Map 02).

**Arts & Culture**

### **Question 10**

**OPPORTUNITY SITES WITH THE ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS AREA**

There are a number of opportunity sites within and around Royal Tunbridge Wells that we are already aware of, which may be suitable for future development/redevelopment.

What uses would you like to see on the Kent & Sussex Hospital Site when the new District General Hospital at Pembury opens and the old site is available for redevelopment?

**Housing only – access to communal garden, the large green open space (Royal Chase / Culverden Down)**

### **Question 11**

There is the possibility that the Town Hall (and other civic buildings) site in Royal Tunbridge Wells will be available for redevelopment during the Plan period.

What uses would you like to see on the site?

The vision of RTW Town Forum members is reflected in the RTW TF presentation  
26 March 2009.

A Town Hall is traditionally in the town centre; the location could be flexible within the Town Centre as the new way of administration is changing; the traditional Town Hall could be scaled down drastically but its presence should be still felt by residents; the Gateway (which should integrate the Tourist Information Office [digital and printed display]) should not be seen as a Town Hall replacement.

The Civic Way's feature as a promenade could be more exploited in case of a new development; this feature would give a hotel development on this site an advantage and might be more appropriate than on the opposite Cinema site.

### **Question 12**

We would welcome your submissions indicating any other sites that you are aware of, or would like to see developed/redeveloped within the area of Royal Tunbridge Wells.

Please note: if you have submitted a site through the **SHLAA** process, please do not submit it again unless you want to amend your submission.

To submit a site please right-click the link to the Site Submission Form and select 'open in a new window'

[http://tunbridgewells-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/spp/tcaap\\_and\\_allocations\\_dpd/ssformtcaap](http://tunbridgewells-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/spp/tcaap_and_allocations_dpd/ssformtcaap)  
If you would like to submit any other supporting information please use the upload facility below. If you have multiple documents you will need to combine these into one uploadable file. You will also have the opportunity within the Site Submission Form to upload a site plan.

RTW Town Forum submission to Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment - **SHLAA**  
- proposed sites in Royal Tunbridge Wells - 23.07.2008  
<http://www.townforum.org.uk/planning/ldfshlaasites230708.pdf>

**RTW Town Forum**  
**8 June 2009**