

Consultation 14 June 2010 – 30 August 2010 (extended from 9 August 2010)

QUESTIONNAIRE

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Town Centre Area Action Plan DPD & Allocation DPD

DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

The development needs in and around Royal Tunbridge Wells have been identified from an extensive evidence base. In some cases, policies in the Core Strategy state that specific types and quantities of development should be provided.

Question 1

Do you consider that Royal Tunbridge Wells has any further development needs that should be added to the list (which you will find on pages 3-4 of the RTW consultation pack), or conversely, that any identified needs are incorrect and should be removed from the list? Please specify and provide evidence to support your answer in the comments box.

Further development needs: all Grot Spots (of all sizes) and Empty Properties (of all sizes) must be included in the housing stock and considered suitable for development.

Leisure Recreation & Culture / Community Facilities:

It is important to take a global look for developments on both sites (Civic Buildings & Cinema) diagonally at the main junction of RTW (Mount Pleasant / Church Road-Crescent Road) and incorporate "Trinity & Environs" as open space in this part of the Town Centre. A 'Hotel de Ville' should stay in this area of the RTW Town Centre, possibly on a section of the Cinema site.

Adult Entertainment (Cabaret entertainment / Nightclub) would be needed in the RTW Town Centre for residents and visitors alike.

Loud Music Bars for 'youngsters' would need to be located in purpose-built facilities to host events - outside of the town centre/residential areas, e.g. in the North Farm / Longfield Road area.

Formal and informal open spaces (e.g. "Trinity & Environs") need to be preserved. (→ supplementary pls. see answers Q.2, Q.4, Q.19, Q.20, Q.26, Q.27)

Infrastructure:

Infrastructure upgrades would need to be provided by utility companies before developers can start. Road systems have to be fit to cope with expansion of areas. (→ additionally pls. see answers Q.18)

'Community Infrastructure Levy' (CIL) will have to be applied to new developments / redevelopments to gain income from developers that can be used for creating green elements such as parks, green spaces, cultural and sports facilities.

TOWN CENTRE BOUNDARY

(see page 6 of RTW consultation pack)

Initial comments were sought on a draft boundary for Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre in April 2009. The boundary now proposed has been amended, where appropriate, to take account of those comments.

Question 2

If you feel strongly about the boundary now proposed and wish to comment further, please do so in the comments box below.

“Trinity Garden & Environs” and Woodbury Park Cemetery are important for the surrounding residential neighbourhoods; WPC should be part of the RTW Town Centre (esp. with next-door neighbour and future development site, Grot Spot - Arriva Bus Depot). (→ supplementary pls. see answers Q.1, Q.4, Q.19, Q.20, Q.26, Q.27)

Question 3

Do you think that Calverley Grounds should be included within the town centre boundary as an integral part of Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre?

(please delete as applicable)

Yes

You may support your answer by providing additional comments in the box provided.

Yes, without Calverley Ground, RTW Town Centre would not have a green public ‘park’.

ISSUES FOR ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS, INCLUDING THE TOWN CENTRE

The Borough Council has identified a number of issues affecting Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre and the wider town (see page 7 of RTW consultation pack). Policies to be provided in the Town Centre Area Action Plan, the Allocations Development Plan Document and the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document can seek to address these issues.

Question 4

Have the main issues for Royal Tunbridge Wells and the town centre been identified correctly?

(please delete as applicable)

No

If “no”, please use the comments box to explain what other issues you feel should be addressed.

No, pls. see also explanations in the remaining part of the questionnaire.

On MAP 'Allocations of Sites'

– The Cinema Site / shop front on Church Road is **NOT** included;
only the shop fronts on Mount Pleasant are marked for development.

On MAP TW08 'Town Centre Green Assets/Infrastructure' 'Part of Potential Green Links'
AND

on MAP TW09 'Green Infrastructure Analysis' – 'Important Open Spaces'

– “Trinity & Environs” is **NOT** showing.

However, the designation of “Trinity and Environs” was requested as an ‘Area of Important Open Spaces’ in November 2005

www.telephonehouse.org.uk/openspace/openspace_trinity_environs_rtw.pdf

and submitted with the Community Plan in 2006 (Safeguarding our Environment)

www.telephonehouse.org.uk/openspace/communityplan_thna210606.pdf

and re-submitted in LDF/Core Strategy consultations several times during the last years

March 2008

www.telephonehouse.org.uk/neighbourhoods/ldfcorestrategy-stage3assess-thna220308.pdf

March 2009 (RTW Town Forum)

www.telephonehouse.org.uk/openspace/trinityenvirons-rtwmasterplan-rtwtf260309.pdf

June 2009

www.telephonehouse.org.uk/neighbourhoods/corestrategy-rtwtcaaplan-questionnaire050609.pdf

(→ supplementary pls. see answers to Q.1, Q.2, Q.19, Q.20, Q.26, Q.27)

TOWN QUARTERS

Question 5

Do you agree with the defined town quarters which are identified on Map TW04 in the RTW consultation pack?

No

Please comment and/or specify how you think they could be amended

No – a Residential ‘Quarter’ has to be defined, which is part of the RTW Inner Town Centre; - York Road / Dudley Road / Lime Hill Road / Inner London Road / Church Road form a residential neighbourhood; these roads are part of the ‘island’ around the former Telephone House.

Further Belvedere Terrace, Church Road, should be part of this residential ‘quarter’ as several town houses were converted from offices during the last years; the same conversions (offices to town houses) would be suitable for the Victorian houses of Clanricade Road and Lonsdale Gardens (the name ‘Gardens’ implies even that it was residential).

Residential roads should have the same style of lampposts, like in Inner London Road, Church Road; additionally it would unite the Inner Town Centre, as Monson Road, Crescent Road or Fiveways already have 'modern' lampposts.

The Business Quarter should be around the Main Railway Station (good access to public transport) with re-development of the various grot spots surrounding the Station.

Question 6

Do you think any of these quarters need particular improvement?
(please delete as applicable)

Yes

Please specify which quarter(s) you think need(s) improvement and why.

The whole RTW Town Centre with its grot spots (small & large) and empty properties have to be improved.

Pedestrian-friendly RTW Town Centre – 'Shared Space' should be the aim: removal of urban clutter (signs, barriers, bollards), the street street / scape manual for RTW, the revision of the Department for Transport's 'Manual for Street' will help to reshape the RTW Town Centre.

Front garden/patio issues with car parking and wheelie bins have to be addressed in the Conservation Area.

MOVEMENT AND ACCESS

Vehicular

Question 7

What are your views on current parking provision in RTW? Please give your views and make any additional comments in the box.

Further conversions of properties/townhouses into small flats or bedsits in the central area of Royal Tunbridge Wells have to be stopped; it would at least remove a major cause of congestion in the Town Centre area (too much private car ownership in the residential areas adds to the problem)

The passé Crescent Car Park has to go underground in the regeneration with dwellings on top.

The Civic Way (used for car parking) would need to be changed to form part of the Open Space on this site, like it was with Decimus Burton's Calverley Parade (very little traffic).

Question 8

Do you think park and ride would be well used if this was introduced in Royal Tunbridge Wells?

(please delete as applicable)

Yes

Question 9

Where do you think a park and ride scheme(s) would be best located? Please specify or make any additional comments you may have in the box provided.

Park and Ride will only succeed if it is made comprehensive (all main roads into the Town Centre need to be covered) and above all it has to be free of charge or affordable (that is cheaper than taking a car into town)

Park and Ride could be arranged from the West Station & Sainsbury's; Union House Car Park is not suitable for Park & Ride, but this area has to be redeveloped in connection with the grot spot, the Union House.

The car park on the Common should not be made available for Park & Ride.

Question 10

What other transport and/or road improvements do you think could be made to ease congestion in Royal Tunbridge Wells? Please give details in the comments box.

Transport Improvements:

Bus 281 & 277, the town centre bus links, have to be re-routed to run through the shopping area of the High Street (not London Road), and stop at the Corn Exchange / Pantiles in Linden Park Road. – Maybe this re-routing has to be coupled with a partial ban on car parking because the High Street is narrow.

North Farm Road with its railway tunnel has to be solved; the one-way solution is inadequate (no footpath is provided to walk comfortably under the bridge).

(→ in addition pls. see answer to Q.18)

MOVEMENT AND ACCESS

Pedestrian and cycle

Question 11

Do you think the town is adequately linked to the surrounding residential areas through good and well managed public footpaths and cycle routes?

(please delete as applicable)

No

Please make any additional comments in the box provided.

Pedestrian-friendly crossings, where footpaths cross roads, would be part of managing footpaths routes.

Footpaths / Pavements – esp. brick pavements – would need to be repaired ‘like for like’!

Cycle ways like in the Hilbert Recreation Ground (done in 2009) would need to be revised as it is a non-permeable surface. Wide and hard surfaces of this kind should not be repeated in any other ground/park of RTW.

Question 12

Do you think the pedestrian crossings are adequate within and around the town?
(please delete as applicable)

No

If you answered “no”, where do you think improvements could be made?

Map TW04 ‘Town Centre Quarters’ shows the ‘Key Local Spaces’ which would be in fact the locations of the ‘pedestrian friendly’ crossings/links in the RTW town centre. As far as the Town Centre is concerned the provision of crossing points is adequate.

With the future plans of the new Government that “Traffic lights are being stripped out in an urban overhaul under radical plans to reshape town centres” and the use of “part-time lights” and “flashing amber lights” - crossings will be easier for pedestrians.

Question 13

Do you think the town could benefit from any public space improvements (for example, better and/or more seating, signage etc)?
(please delete as applicable)

Yes

Please specify.

Yes to improvements of street signage;

Street signage needs to be drastically reduced to eliminate non-essential and redundant signs; signage should be appropriate to the historic area and needs to be improved to enable tourists to find their ways around.

Benches are big part of ‘being invited’ to a town (revision is needed as some benches stand on the wrong places e.g. most polluted junctions)

Public space improvements include the improvement of a ‘pedestrian friendly spine’ in the RTW Town Centre; the Bus gate is part of it and needs to be enforced and supported by the Urban Policing Team.

Lampposts form an important part of the street scene. Motorway type lampposts (e.g. Mount Pleasant) should be replaced; the lampposts of the inner town residential roads (e.g. York Road, Dudley Road, Lime Hill Road) should be in keeping with neighbouring roads (Inner London Road, Church Road, Fiveways).
(→ in addition pls. see answer to Q.5).

LAND USES

Question 14

Do you think there are enough shops in the town centre?
(please delete as applicable)

Yes

If you answered “no”, what type of shops would you like to see more of (for example, department stores, specialist shops)?

However, an additional supermarket will provide more choice.

Internet shopping will be part of the 21st century. – Small shop owners in the town centre are worried that they loose out if they do not move to the retail estate (the former industrial estate) which developed massively during the last decade.

Question 15

Would you like to see more cafés and/or restaurants in the Town Centre?
(please delete as applicable)

No

If you answered “yes”, where would you like to see them?

No – there are already many cafes/restaurants in the different areas of the Town Centre; sometimes many are unoccupied for long periods of the day.

Question 16

Do you think there should be more offices in the town centre?
(please delete as applicable)

Yes

If you answered “yes”, where do you think these would be best located?

Yes, to offices. – There is no point in planning for more offices unless there is an identified demand for more office space. The tendency at the moment is for offices to relocate out of the Town Centre because of high cost of premises, traffic congestion and parking problems for both staff and clients in most towns.

Whilst walking to work is to be encouraged, few people live near enough to their work these days.

The priorities for growth in Tunbridge Wells should be in health, creative and higher education sectors.
(TW / West Kent Economy - Local Economy & Housing Select Committee Working Group 2009)

Question 17

Do you think there should be more residential development within the town centre, or should it mostly be located on the outskirts of the town? Please specify where.

Poor planning policy has already caused the Town Centre to become over populated and every street to be lined with parked cars resulting in traffic congestion and excessive pollution. Therefore more flat conversions in the town centre are unsuitable and would repeat the mistake of the past as the big impact of parking for owners, tenants, visitors, was not foreseen or ignored (like car ownership would not exist or grow).

Bringing empty properties of all sizes back into use and refurbishing Grot Spots of all sizes will provide residential accommodation; at the same time run-down areas will be improved. But if such developments were carried on the high density basis of the past the problems of congestion and pollution would be exacerbated.

Residential development on the cinema site (with the railway tunnel and its side effects underneath) might not be suitable.

Question 18

What do you think should be the priority for the Longfield Road/North Farm area? Examples are: better transport links; more industrial and/or business uses, etc. Please specify.

North Farm, which was set up as an Industrial Estate is rapidly developing into an out-of-town retail trading centre that will eventually kill trade in the Town Centre. Before any further enlargement is approved the problem of traffic congestion will have to be resolved. A lack of foresight has resulted in a road system in the North Farm area that is not fit for purpose and cannot cope with the expansion that has already been permitted. The priority should be to sort out the present situation before making it even worse (e.g. North Farm Road with its railway tunnel has to be solved, as the one-way solution is inadequate; no footpath is provided to walk comfortably under the bridge).
(→ in addition pls. see answers to Q.1, Q.10)

Loud Music Bars for 'youngsters' should be located in purpose-built facilities to host events - outside of the town centre/residential areas, - e.g. North Farm / Longfield Rd area. Noise nuisance and inconsiderate behaviour of night revellers cause problems in the town centre.
(→ in addition pls. see answer to Q.1)

GREEN ASSETS

Question 19

Parks and areas of woodlands can provide different functions and are often used in different ways.

Do you use your local park and/or visit local woodland?

(please delete as applicable)

Yes

If yes, which park and/or woodland do you use and for what reason do you visit? If no, please state which is your local park and/or woodland (if known) and give reasons why you do not use these areas.

RTW Town Centre Neighbourhood, THNA, uses mostly the Common or Calverley Ground for relaxation and recreation in pleasant surroundings.

Part of the neighbourhood is as well Trinity Garden, which could be 'the pride and joy'. This historic central piece of land with its trees and tombstones, encircled by a stonewall and surrounded by many listed building, has to be looked after and protected as open space together with its environs.
(→ supplementary pls. see answers to Q.1, Q.2, Q.4, Q.20, Q.26, Q.27)

Question 20

Do you think there are any areas of Royal Tunbridge Wells that are lacking in public open green spaces? If so, please specify.

Open Spaces are provided in most parts of RTW; the priority should be to maintain and safeguard these valuable assets from encroachments.

Trinity/Trinity Garden & adjoining gardens/open spaces should not only be preserved as Green Open Space in the RTW Town Centre, but improved.
(→ supplementary pls. see answers to Q.1, Q.2, Q.4, Q.19, Q.26, Q.27)

Question 21

Do you think there should be more street trees and planting around the town? Please specify any particular areas that you think could benefit.

Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom (involving TWBC, businesses, volunteers) should be part of the planting around the town.

ONE more tree would need to be planted in the row of trees (planted in 2000/2001) on the land / green open space along the Civic Way (next to the flower/vegetable triangle); it would be the focal view point when coming out of York Road onto Mount Pleasant.

[The two lime trees on the Common are a similar focal point when walking from Mount Pleasant towards London Road.]

Surface car parks should be landscaped greener and could have (more) trees which provide shade during the hot seasons and enhance the environs at the same time (e.g. at Sainsbury's); trees are a contribution to the green amenity for the environs and neighbours (e.g. on the land in York Road or behind Hanover House, Church Road)

Solutions have to be found when planting street trees as the roots are 'interfering' with the brick pavements of Royal Tunbridge Wells (Mount Pleasant pavements have large tarmac patches since summer 2008)

Street trees are 'bollards'.

SITE-SPECIFIC ISSUES

Question 22

Please refer to pages 8-12 of the RTW consultation pack.

Do you agree with the process by which the Borough Council has filtered out those sites that either do not need to be allocated by virtue of their size; or should not be allocated because they are unsuitable for development?

(please delete as applicable)

Disagree

Please make any additional comments you may have in the box provided.

It is known that there is the strong reliance of local planning on windfall sites in RTW and the RTW Town Forum strongly disagreed with any site size threshold and the laissez-faire approach to windfall sites because of the uncertainty for communities, developers and planners.

Question 23

Do you wish to make any comments about a specific site? If so, please write the site reference number and your comments in the box provided. Please comment, in particular, on the uses it is considered to be suitable for.

It is important to consider economy / environs / culture, community & democratic meeting venues and to take a global look at the developments on both sites (Civic Buildings & Cinema) diagonally at the main junction of RTW (Mount Pleasant / Church Road-Crescent Road) together with "Trinity & Environs" as open space in the town centre.

"The things that will determine if we achieve our vision for Tunbridge Wells: our economy – our environment – our society" – www.tunbridgewellstogether.co.uk

Question 24

Do you think there are particular sites and/or areas that are not suitable for future development? Please specify and state why you think they are not suitable.

Sites not considered suitable for development: – in light of the new Government’s policy: Urban Gardens.

Green Belt as such should not be considered as sacred land as very often stretches of ‘Green Belt’ land have been left to deteriorate and are blighting the rural landscape. These stretches, the rural ‘Grot Spots’, having been tolerated by TWBC, could be as suitable for development as the windfall sites, often resulting in urban garden grabbing.

Question 25

Do you wish to submit any further sites for consideration for allocation in either the Town Centres Area Action Plan DPD or Allocations DPD?

(please delete as applicable)

No

Please note that any sites submitted after the closing date for this consultation may not be considered as the Borough Council has made two previous “calls for sites”.

Please note: if you have already submitted a particular site through an earlier process, please do not submit it again unless you want to amend your submission.

To submit a site, please use the Site Submission Form, which you can download at <http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/tcaap>. If you would like to submit any other supporting information please return it to us with the form. You will also have the opportunity within the Site Submission Form to attach a site plan.

Question 26

It may be necessary for the Borough Council to identify additional sites to meet the Borough’s development needs. Are there any areas of Royal Tunbridge Wells that you think should not accommodate any further development of a particular type? Please be specific about your reasons.

**No further development: “Trinity & Environs”
– this whole area should form part of the ‘Town Centre Green Assets’ / ‘Potential Green Links’ and ‘Important Open Spaces’.**

Please refer to

<http://www.telephonehouse.org.uk/openspace/trinityenvirons-rtwmasterplan-rtwtf260309.pdf>

part of the RTW Town Forum presentation 26 March 2009

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

in attendance of the Leader of the Council, Senior Officers, RTW TF members

and RTW Town Forum submission

<http://www.townforum.org.uk/consultation/corestrategy-rtwtcaaplan-questionnaire-rtwtf080609.pdf>

– ‘Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Area Action Plan – Engagement 1’

(→ supplementary pls. see answers to Q.1, Q.2, Q.4, Q.19, Q.20, Q.27)

ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

Question 27

If you have additional comments about Royal Tunbridge Wells that you consider the Borough Council should take into account when preparing the Town Centres Area Action Plan DPD and/or Allocations DPD, please make them in the comments box below.

In the TCAAP the designation of “Trinity & Environs” should be taken into account.

“Trinity & Environs” with its many listed buildings are part of the ‘Royal Tunbridge Wells Heritage Assets’ (- MAP TW03) and an essential part of the cultural life of the area, the future of which needs to be secure, together with its important green setting and open spaces.

<http://www.telephonehouse.org.uk/openspace/trinityenvirons-rtwmasterplan-rtwtf260309.pdf>

(→ supplementary pls. see answers to Q.1, Q.2, Q.4, Q.19, Q.20, Q.26).

Katharina Mahler-Bech
Royal Tunbridge Wells
20 August 2010

**ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS
Town Centre Area Action Plan DPD & Allocation DPD**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Development Framework

Consultation 14 June 2010 – 30 August 2010 (extended from 9 August 2010)

Telephone House Neighbours Association
www.telephonehouse.org.uk

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS Town Centre Area Action Plan - 2010

References: - Power Point Presentations

Issues concerning street scene & street clutter in RTW – ppt to KCC
www.townforum.org.uk/community/khs-twbc-rtwtfmeeting04112009-ptdb.pdf
– Daniel Bech (4 November 2009) (219 slides)

Issues concerning street scene & street clutter in RTW – ppt to TWBC
www.townforum.org.uk/community/twbc-rtwtfmeeting230909-slides.pdf
– Daniel Bech (23 September 2009) (217 slides)

Royal Tunbridge Wells Conservation Area at Risk – ppt
Detractors in Royal Tunbridge Wells, problems blighting RTW, grot spots
www.townforum.org.uk/community/rtwconservationareaatrisk-rtwfppt300709db.pdf
– Daniel Bech (30 July 2009) (104 slides)

Planning/LDF/Core Strategy – ppt
www.townforum.org.uk/planning/rtwmasterplan-rtwtf260309.pdf
– Daniel Bech (26 March 2009)

Grot Spots in Royal Tunbridge Wells – ppt (start November 2005, revisited October 2006)
Highways Grots (start March 2006, revisited May 2007)
"Is this Royal Tunbridge Wells in 2008?" (revisited again 2008)
www.townforum.org.uk/focusgroup/grotspots_handout_s100408.pdf
– Daniel Bech (10 April 2008)

Transport – *"Getting around Tunbridge Wells"* – ppt
www.townforum.org.uk/transport/transport220307.pdf
– Daniel Bech (22 March 2007)

Survey of the Mount Pleasant Motorway Lampposts
www.townforum.org.uk/focusgroup/kcchighwaysreport-lampposts-180307db.pdf
– Daniel Bech (18 March 2007)

Grot Spots –Top Eyesores in Royal Tunbridge Wells – ppt (start November 2005)
"Is this Royal Tunbridge Wells in 2006?" (revisited 2006)
www.townforum.org.uk/focusgroup/brightenup261006.pdf
– Daniel Bech (26 October 2006)

Highways Grots in Royal Tunbridge Wells – ppt (start March 2006)
"Highways - High Standard?"
www.townforum.org.uk/focusgroup/highways270306/highways270306.html
– Daniel Bech (27 March 2006)

Grot Spots –Top Eyesores in Royal Tunbridge Wells – ppt (start November 2005)
"Is this Royal Tunbridge Wells in 2005?"
www.townforum.org.uk/focusgroup/slideshow/slideshow291105.html
– Daniel Bech (29 November 2005)