

Cleanliness, Disturbance and the Appearance of the Parish

By and large Thurnham is perceived as a clean parish. But there were a number of issues that exercised people considerably.

One of their principal concerns was the need for better maintenance of verges and hedges across the parish. As one person put it “home owners sometimes let their gardens spill over and grow onto the pavement. This can necessitate people having to walk near the road which is not safe”. But responsibility does not stop with home owners. There are several examples of verges not in private ownership where overgrowing vegetation causes a nuisance particularly in high summer and autumn where growth is at its highest. This is the case on the pavement between the Bell pub and Averanches Road where overgrowing shrubs make it necessary for pedestrians to duck or walk in the road every time they pass – a particular irritation to parents living in Bearsted Park since they have to make the journey four times a day to take their children to and from school.

In the Roundwell area of the parish the footpath leading up to Bearsted Turning is overgrown with stinging nettles in high summer – the heavy rain in 2007 made the growth particularly lush, causing pedestrians to walk in the road to avoid being stung.

But it isn't just footpaths where overgrowing hedgerows cause problems. They constitute a real hazard along the Pilgrims Way and Coldblow Lane, not just to motorists but to pedestrians and horse riders as well. A balance needs to be struck between the need for people and their cars to use the lanes whilst at the same time avoiding disturbing nesting birds, preserving wild flowers and not cutting hedges and verges too much, thereby encouraging further vehicle erosion.

Second on the list of priorities was the prevention of fly tipping (mentioned by 44% of respondents). Areas in Water Lane, particularly by the bridleway adjacent to the M20 Bridge – where this picture was taken, beneath the bridge itself, the junction of Water and Coldblow Lanes and Crismill Lane were locations of particular concern.

Thirty one per cent of people wanted to see more litter bins provided around the parish and 23% the



“Fly tipping in Crismill lane is atrocious and the local authority and police seem to have little concern about the issue as it is a private road.”

Thurnham resident

provision of more poop scoop bins. Dog mess on pavements, especially on the route from Bearsted Park to Roseacre School, was mentioned by a significant number.

To help deal with the litter problem Thurnham residents want better provision for recycling. At present just over 25% of household rubbish goes to recycling. The government's new waste strategy, published in May 2007, sets a target of 40% by 2010 and 50% by 2020. And the need for more recycling is only too apparent given that it is estimated that the amount of refuse thrown away by households is equivalent to half a tonne for every man, woman and child in the country.





If these targets are to be met it needs to be made easier for people to recycle. The Borough Council's refuse collection services were reviewed in 2007. Weekly collections will remain and fortnightly recycling collections will be phased in for plastics, glass, paper, card and cans. It remains to be seen how effective these will be and reliance on a fortnightly collection is unlikely to be enough.

There is always a need for facilities that people can use between collections, especially for families. At present there are no facilities within Thurnham to cater for this requirement. To dispose of newspapers the nearest facility for many is the white container in the yard behind Rickwoods.

For a more comprehensive range of facilities the nearest available option is Tesco at Grove Green, good for those who do their shopping there and who drive; not at all convenient for those who do not.

"Rain water collects at road side in Ware Street resulting in douching of pedestrians by traffic."

Thurnham resident

Increased street and street gutter cleaning were amongst residents' other concerns - mentioned by 24 and 26% of the people respectively.

Failure to clear gutters allows leaves and other material to clog drains, increase the flow of surface water causing puddles and minor flooding. Fifteen per cent wanted to see the better maintenance of trees and woods and 9% expressed concern about abandoned cars.

We recommend that the Parish Council should:

- **Press the Kent County Council to review its policy for cutting hedgerows and verges so that they do not over grow roads and pavements in order that motorists, pedestrians and horse**

riders can proceed with greater safety; while at the same time avoiding damage to wildlife and vehicular erosion. A policy of 'little and often would seem best'.

- **Invest in more litter and poop scoop bins to be strategically placed around the parish.**

- **Act to provide recycling facilities within the parish to complement the services provided by the Borough Council and private sector providers.**

- **In conjunction with the Bearsted Parish Council act to find more effective ways of keeping the pavements clear of dog mess, especially on routes to and from Roseacre Junior and Thurnham Infants schools.**

- **Press the Kent County Council to improve gutter cleaning and ensure drains are maintained in good working order so that they do not become clogged, can better cope with the increased incidence of heavy rainfall that we experienced in 2007 and which forecasters predict will only increase with global warming.**

According to new research by the CPRE half of the country is now disturbed by noise and light pollution compared with 26% forty years ago. Land in the South East is under the greatest pressure where 320 sq miles of countryside have been affected by new development in the last decade. These findings were reflected in responses to our questionnaire. Of the many forms of disturbance on which we invited comment, the one that dominated peoples' replies was noise pollution and how it had increased in recent years.

Residents' concerns ranged from noise generated by events at the County Showground and Cobham Manor, to the sound of motor bikes, quad and trail bikes – and not just in the more rural parts of the parish but in residential areas such as Bearsted Park as well. Noise from low flying aircraft (particularly microlites) and shot guns, especially at weekends, and light pollution also figured in peoples' concerns. But by far the greatest number of comments related to noise from the M20 motorway (mentioned by over 59% of respondents), and noise and vibration from the CTRL (38%).

Heavily influenced by wind direction, noise from

the motorway pervades virtually all of the parish – and areas beyond - and forms a constant backdrop to outdoor activity for much of the year. The roar of traffic is especially apparent as one approaches and passes under the bridges that cross Thurnham Lane, Water Lane and Crismill Lane.

Many people who experience it say the noise from the CTRL is accompanied by an unsettling low frequency vibration or resonance. The CTRL crosses Thurnham on an embankment on which there is little or no noise attenuation or other environmental protection measures. The effects currently experienced by residents will only be accentuated as both the speed and the number of trains increase.

“The M20 can be heard every day, all day and all night. It ruins the country atmosphere of Thurnham.”

“Noise from the M20 and CTRL is unbearable at times.”

“The noise issue from the CTRL is still of concern. There has been no attempt by CTRL to protect local residents from the noise pollution and rail speeds have increased.”

Thurnham residents

No compensation has yet been paid to Thurnham residents with regard to the adverse impact the CTRL has made on their property. The KIG/AXA application has generated concern over even more noise and light pollution for which, as matters stand, residents stand no chance of being compensated for should the development ever proceed.

We recommend that:

- More should be done to reduce noise pollution from the M20 Motorway by resurfacing the road with a low noise surface.**
- Barriers should be used to reduce noise from the M20 and the CTRL.**
- The Parish Council should explore ways in which it can promote a good neighbour policy by encouraging residents to be considerate in all activities that are likely to impact on their immediate neighbours.**
- The impact of noise and light pollution should continue to be of high concern when considering applications for commercial and industrial development in the parish and any development allowed should be accompanied by conditions limiting the impact on neighbours to acceptable levels.**