

Letters to the Courier 9 December 2005

LACK OF ACTION DISPIRITING

Let us hope that Ptolemy Dean's impassioned call to the local and county councils to take positive action to improve their quality of care is acknowledged and acted upon.

One lamp standard does not make or break a town but it is a clear example of the level of care and attention to detail that is given to the townscape.

What Ptolemy has said has been said in different ways before and I hope that this time someone is driven to take notice and take positive action.

In 1993 we undertook a study of the street furniture on behalf of the borough council and the audit was passed to the council as a set of slides for their use.

Following that survey the only apparent outcome was the redecoration of some street furniture, the adoption of maroon as a town centre colour and the arrival of advertising and information points that added to the street clutter.

Another local practice, Hazle McCormack Young, undertook a townscape survey and mounted an exhibition for the council illustrating improvements, to the town centre but the vision promised by that has not been carried forward.

In a similar address to the Civic Society I drew on the early attempts of the civic movement to improve the environment by the removal of unnecessary 'street furniture and the failure of the planning system to deliver an orderly and exciting environment.

What has happened in Tunbridge Wells is by no means unusual but given the quality of the raw material it is dispiriting.

Our streets and open spaces are disfigured by poorly designed, poorly sited and ever-increasing clutter that denies the special character of the town.

Every civic space is important and we are more fortunate than many. Please could the council sit up and take note of what has been said, understand the particular character of Tunbridge Wells and respond with imagination and enthusiasm.

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Why aren't streets swept more often?

Ptolemy Dean makes a number of valid points in connection with pride in our civic environment and he is to be commended for this.

A question that might also be asked is why residential streets are not swept more frequently.

Where I live they are not swept more than about 10 times a year and even then it seems that the council is powerless to arrange for temporary parking restrictions, at least one side of the road in advance of these occasions, consequently the kerbs are never properly cleaned.

The erection of a lamp standard, appropriate though it is, in Chapel Place does at least explain why Kent Highway Services have been too busy to explain why so many street lights have been blazing away 24/7 all through the summer months. I drew the authorities attention to this matter in June.

We are told that even a TV left on stand-by is not environmentally friendly and costly in the long term, so the unnecessary cost is, of course, borne by council tax payers.

Now that we have longer, nights, perhaps failed lights might also be attended to.

A L Helm
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