

LETTERS TO THE COURIER 15 June 2007

Key area of town is complete disgrace

Difficulties for ambulances caused by the new rash of bollards at Five Ways – there are now 62 in this small area – is only one of the problems of this key part of the town (→ Courier 8 June 2007).

Our recent Soroptimist survey, published as Around the clock, found that four fifths of users described the area as drab and unwelcoming, and visitors to the town were disappointed.

Forty per cent of those surveyed referred to feeling intimidated or uncomfortable when using it. The promised taxi stand there remains a dream.

Meanwhile as a result of neglect and incoherent action Five Ways and the precinct is a vista of poles, advertising and other clutter including an intrusive stand used for motorbikes.

The state of the Currys side wall and of the clock plinth as a result of skateboarders is a disgrace and Kent Highways have added to the rundown look with ugly tarmac patches used where paving bricks are missing.

Local people had heaps of suggestions about making the area more pleasant to use which we set out in our printed report with recommendations to the borough council and Kent Highways.

Your readers will find the report in full on the Town Forum website  www.townforum.org.uk under “Forum Members”.



<http://www.townforum.org.uk/focusgroup/fiveways-aroundtheclock-survey-views-may2007.pdf>

REPORT / SURVEY: Townscape / Streetscene: Five Ways - 'Around the Clock'

Soroptimist Intl. Tunbridge Wells and District

May 2005 - for RTW TF Meeting 24.05.07

We think this vital hub of the town needs a coordinated strategy by the local authorities, police and local businesses.

Greg Clark and Chief Superintendent Mark Salisbury have both written to us enthusiastically about our ideas. - So come on county and borough councils, get your act together.

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SAFETY CONCERNS SPARKED BY NEW PRECINCT BOLLARDS

MARY HARRIS - 08 June 2007

Bollards which have been placed at either end of the pedestrian precinct in Tunbridge Wells could cost lives, warned an ambulance crew member.

The addition of two more heavy posts by Kent Highways both at the top and bottom of Calverley Road are designed to stop vehicles entering.

But this week the concerned 999 responder, who asked not to be named, said the barriers could have fatal consequences for patients. And South East Coast Ambulance Service confirmed on Wednesday it had "raised concerns" with highways chiefs.

The ambulance worker said: "If something were to happen now there is no physical way at all a fire appliance or ambulance would get in there. We could squeeze through before. Absolutely lives are at risk. The risk to life is greater with the prevention of fire appliances and ambulances getting to the precinct than it is someone being knocked down by a car in there. I've never been called to any accident in the precinct involving a motor vehicle in there." He said: "You wouldn't get a height vehicle in there if someone was trapped in a tall building. With an ambulance, you couldn't get as close to a patient as you might want. These bollards will have to come down."

Kent Highways Services said this week the ambulance service could access a key at the Town Hall to unlock the posts.

Spokesman Phil Scrivener added: "We wrote and told the emergency services of our intentions and both Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue Service said they would not require access. The ambulance service can gain access by using a key from the Town Hall, although their usual practice is to park their vehicle at one end of the precinct. We are aware that they have raised some concerns and will be meeting them shortly to discuss future arrangements."

South East Coast Ambulance Service spokeswoman Liz Spiers said it had raised concerns about access to Calverley Road and was in discussions with Kent Highway Services to "resolve the matter". She added: "In the meantime a note has been placed on our control centre computer system that crews can access the roads by contacting borough council parking attendants who have been provided with keys to the bollards."

08.06.2007