

News

Latest News Headlines

Here are a number of news article specifically related to the centre. Further items will be added at frequent intervals. The newer articles are listed towards the top of the page and the older ones towards the bottom.

- February 2008: FONAGVC News Archive System
- February 2008: Goodbye Budgens - Hello Co-op
- February 2008: Local Group Fights to Remove Mobile Phone
Masts
- February 2008: FONAGVC Maintains Planters

Comments about the articles can be posted to us at contact@fonagvc.co.uk.

FONAGVC News Archive System

Please note that we are now operating a news archive system.

Earlier new items than the current one have been transferred to our **2007 News Archive** section.

To access this section click on **2007 News Archive** under **News**.

Goodbye Budgens - Hello Co-op

The closure of Budgen's supermarket on the Co-op owned site combined with the possibility that the Co-op might not take over and reopen has dominated issues in New Ash Green for the past two months.

Those feeling particularly vulnerable were the families with very young children to care for and the elderly both of whom would have found it very difficult to travel several miles to the nearest alternative.

Further, the supermarket being our anchor store there was an additional worry that the loss of visitors to the centre would seriously damage other local traders.

The situation led to the formation of a campaign group to protest at the impending closure.

A protest was organised outside the entrance to Budgens which attracted a large crowd with banners ready for the photocall by local newspapers.



Subsequent to that the Sevenoaks District M.P. Michael Fallon, visited the centre to hear the views of local residents all of whom gathered in the rain under the arcaded walkway in The Row opposite Budgens. (In the photo to the right, Michael is centre left wearing red and white tie.)

Michael visited the Village Association offices shortly afterwards for a more relaxed debate in the V.A. offices where FONAGVC and others were able to discuss with him the issues which needed attention, not only in relation to the impending supermarket closure but also in relation to other issues of importance to the centre as a whole.

As it eventually developed the initial fears were not realised as the Co-op did reopen with a very impressive organisation to move in with a minimal interruption in trade of only 1 ½ days.

Another gathering was organised, again in the pouring rain, (note rain drops on camera lens) to welcome the Co-op and hear its temporary manager Alex promising the future involvement of the Co-op with local community issues.



After the initial reorganisation Alex will be returning to his own store in West Kingsdown leaving the New Ash Green store to be managed by the previous Budgens manager Vanessa with continuity of employment for all the original Budgens staff.

What the situation did was inadvertently do the village a favour by issuing a wake up call to the village of the importance of the centre.

This has resulted in the formation of another group with the same long-term aspirations as our own although possibly with detail differences as to how that might be achieved.

We have met Alex and Vanessa to discuss how the Co-op might become more involved with the local community and in the next update to our web site there will be a new article on the supermarket and the previous Budgens article will be transferred to the past traders section.

Local Group Fights to Remove Mobile Phone Masts

Friends of New Ash Green Village Centre are opposing the installation of mobile phone masts and equipment in and on the tower at the centre of their village of New Ash Green, Kent.

So far they have successfully campaigned to persuade the local authority, Sevenoaks District Council, that the installation of the equipment in the tower is not permitted development and requires planning permission.

The mobile phone operator refused to accept the Council's decision and appealed to the government inspectors in an attempt to overturn their ruling.

The appeal process has now been completed and their appeal has been dismissed.

This leaves the operator with three possible options, apply for planning permission, remove the apparatus or appeal to the high court.

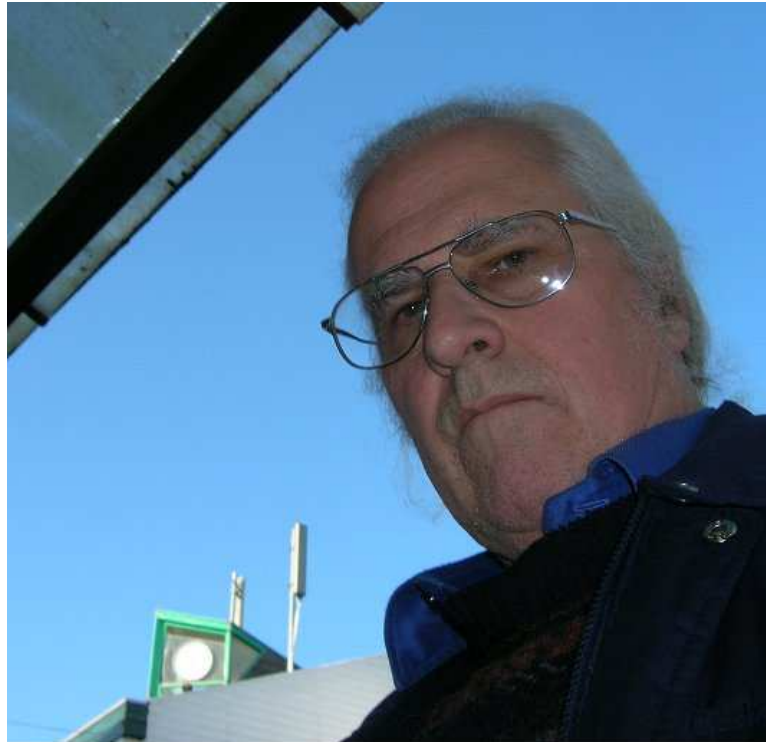


The background to this is that the operator served a notice to install on Sevenoaks District Council, the Council failed to check the notice, simply assumed that the installation was permitted development and that a planning application was not required.

When the Friends checked the planning file they found that there were several errors on the installation notice, the main one being that the location of the masts was incorrectly given both by address and Ordnance Survey co-ordinates.

The incorrectly stated site location was over 100m from the tower and in the exit from a nearby car park. There was nothing on the installation notice, which gave any indication of the intention to install the masts in such an architecturally sensitive location and at such a low level in relation to the village's pedestrian precinct.

Further, the installation of the equipment within the tower, was found to require a planning application for a change of use since the tower had originally been designed as an amenity, an observation tower with extensive views across open countryside and only had a later planning consent for retail use.



Spokesman for The Friends, **Consulting Engineer, Stuart Richardson**, said that research carried out by the group had discovered many instances where they felt that Sevenoaks District Council had not paid sufficient attention to planning matters within the village centre and that this had resulted in major damage to the centre's architecture.

On this particular issue the Friends had nothing against the use of mobile phones, but the installation in the village centre was architecturally inappropriate. He hoped that their success to date would give other pressure groups encouragement to oppose the installation of other masts where they feel that the chosen site is damaging local amenity.

At first, Sevenoaks District Council had refused to support The Friends but after several months of letters detailing the precise wording of the legislation concerning permitted development eventually agreed and supported their case.

This was later joined by the governing body of New Ash Green, the Village Association and their chairman Councillor Alan Pett who joined in the objections, which lead to the dismissal of the appeal.

FONAGVC Maintains Planters

As noted in earlier articles, FONAGVC having maintained and replanted the two planters outside The Granary and The Deli, have now moved on to deal with other planters in the centre.

During the work we have received numerous comments from local residents, most of them encouraging and occasionally humorous.

The suggestion that we are working off ASBOs is not true.



Christine tackles the planter outside the Village Hall.



Whilst Stuart cleans out the base of the other end of the same planter.



Another team member Gill takes a well-earned rest during work on the planter outside the Co-op.

We have a scheme to recycle your unwanted plants! More of this later, but in the meantime don't bin your unwanted shrubs.

Contact us: contact@fonagvc.co.uk. We need them.