

Downswood Parish Council Meeting – 1st October 2024

Borough Councillor's Report – Cllr Val Springett

We have been advised that work to de-silt Mallards Lake will commence in about two weeks' time. I understand that signs have been put up at Mallards Way Open Space to advise park users that works will be starting soon. If anyone has any queries about the work to be undertaken then let me know, and I will raise them with the parks and open spaces team.

Whilst not located within Downswood parish, the application for the conversion of The Vale nursing home into eleven flats has caused upset amongst residents in nearby Otterbourne Place, and Downswood residents may be interested to know what changes are coming. The existing wall fronting Otterbourne Place will be removed to expand the parking area for the new flats, which I think is a great shame and the existing grassed area on the corner with Willington Street will also disappear. The Vale occupies quite a prominent location and the effect on the existing street scene will be quite noticeable.

The application was put before the MBC planning committee with a recommendation to approve it from officers. I spoke against the application as I agree with residents that the impact on the street scene will be quite dramatic, and the minimal amount of proposed parking for the occupants of the new flats is also likely to cause parking issues in Otterbourne Place. Unfortunately, as KCC Highways had raised no objections to the amount of parking proposed, a refusal on that basis would have almost certainly have been overturned by an inspector at appeal. I and two others did vote against the application but it was approved.

MBC will shortly be consulting on the preferred approaches of the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople DPD (development plan document). This is a necessary process to find suitable sites to meet the needs of these communities. This document will be discussed at the Planning and Healthier Stronger Communities Policy Advisory Committee, which is being held this Wednesday, 2nd October at 6.30pm.