



Erith Town & Around

Erith Town Forum Newsletter

Issue 22

Winter 2009

NOTE from the Chair

Welcome to the Winter 2009 edition of Town and Around. Our most recent meetings have concentrated once again on bringing together the community thoughts on the Erith Western Gateway Development. You may remember that plans were put forward and a developer selected, only for this to be abandoned due to the present economic climate. However Erith Forum and most of you I suspect, were not so disappointed because the plans included far too much high density housing (flats) which Erith cannot accommodate. And, just as in the past when we were pressing for development of a new shopping centre, the Forum are taking the opportunity to let the London Borough of Bexley know that the community care about the area and how it is developed and will continue to press for real family housing, green riverside spaces, community facilities, preservation of historic buildings and sensible road layouts as the prime consideration within any new development. The centre pages of this issue have been given over to a copy of the document sent to the Council setting out the community thoughts in detail.

If you would like to make a comment on this submission please send it to erithtownforum@hotmail.com

We are also able to clarify the position about secondary transfer to Erith School, and this is reported in the newsletter.

It was good to see Erith Forum members attending the public meeting of the Riverside Resources Forum to hear how work on the Belvedere Waste to Energy Incinerator is progressing and to be informed about Cory's intention to make sure the jobs created will be advertised locally, and that included in their plans will be apprenticeships.

The Forum Management Committee try very hard to respond to local issues but we need the community to work with us. Come to our meetings, dates and times are printed the back page, and visit our website www.erithtownforum.org.uk

Doreen Ives

Wedge Card Launches in Erith



Wedge Card, the local reward card for local, independent shops, has chosen Erith to launch its first card outside London, in partnership with Orbit South Housing Association. Orbit South has joined forces with Wedge Card to reward its residents Wedge Card, the local reward card for local, independent shops, has chosen Erith to with discounts and special offers for supporting their community by shopping locally.

Wedge Card believes that local shops are the lifeblood of our communities. By rewarding people for shopping locally, Wedge Card reminds people of the great value they can find in their local shops. Diana and her father John Bird of The Big Issue founded wedge in 2006.

"Wedge is going to help those shops that make the community tick by encouraging the public to buy in the local market-place. Because it's in

the family-owned cafes, butchers and bookshops that people get to know one another and become part of their community. If you don't have a community then you're more likely to be lonely, and you're more likely to be lost" says John.

Wedge Card is now in 20 neighbourhoods across London and is spreading fast. It has established a fantastic network across London of 900 shops and 40,000 cardholders.

With over 40 shops, pubs and businesses in Erith and Northumberland Heath signed up to the initiative, Wedge Card looks to be taking the North Kent area by storm.

For more information contact:

Petronella Tyson
020 7401 3913
petronella@wedgocard.co.uk
www.wedgocard.co.uk

Erith Town Forum Submission on the Erith Western Gateway Development

Erith cannot accommodate 700 more dwellings. Other parts of the borough must take their share. Erith already has too many blocks of flats. It would be disastrous to build more; the nail in the coffin of community cohesion in Erith. If a study were done we are sure it would show that the community is made up of families of three four and five who need family houses with gardens. Town houses perhaps on three floors would provide much more suitable accommodation and make it easier to develop a sustainable community rather than the itinerant groups currently moving in and out of many of the flats recently built in the area. This lack of community has brought with it crime and anti-social behaviour which did not previously exist on the same scale in the area.

Green park facilities near the river continue to be a must for the community together with the further development and encouragement of river sporting and business activities. Once again Forum members look to the London Borough of Bexley to recognise that the river ought to be the centre of attraction for the town. More attention should be given to its care and maintenance in order to make the shore an attractive place for visitors. Information about passing river traffic, as used to be the case, would again attract visitors to the town with the consequent impact on the retail businesses now open. What about a river transport system from the Pier up to London, something similar to the service provided by the Clipper boats currently going from Greenwich.

During both attempts to get the Erith Western Gateway

marketed, a hotel has featured on the list of buildings to go up. Does Erith need a hotel? Clearly those who work in the industry do not see the viability because on neither occasion has a hotel chain come forward to take up the offer. Maybe it's time to think again and look at the Walnut Tree Road site for other purposes. Small/large office units or perhaps small scale assembly type industry? Cheaper rents than other areas of Bexley but with good transport links to other parts of the borough and direct to Woolwich DLR to Docklands and the City and West End. Lack of disabled access to Erith Station might then be addressed at the same time. If planners continue to consider a hotel viable then perhaps a different site perhaps directly on the A206 might be better.

Is the area designated as "Erith Western Gateway" the appropriate area for regeneration? This question has been asked many times. Many feel that certainly the Riverside gardens should only be considered for redesign as a park area. Whether Bosworth House and Carrack House should be included has been questioned. The top of Pier Road certainly does need to be included.

The scope for more retail units will only be a reality if we see the empty units already in the town taken up and trading successfully. Clearly more work still needs to be done to attract many of those missing shops that the community need, e.g. another bank, launderette, high quality restaurant which opens in the evening, and of course, the long promised return of a regular market.

Attracting more people to come, work and live in the



area brings an obligation to make sure community facilities exist for them. Soft play areas, very popular for everyday use and children's parties, small children's outside adventure park, skateboard area, ball court, purpose built Community Centre.

Europa Gym presently offers so many activities to hundreds of children throughout the borough and purpose built accommodation for Europa would be a very big plus for Erith. Can they wait that long? That is the question.

The Carnegie building must be conserved, made accessible to all and could be used as a conference centre, exhibition space, accommodation for small and large parties, meetings etc. These are ways to allow the building to pay for its own upkeep. Erith Museum needs a permanent home and the Carnegie building is the obvious choice.

There is consensus that Bexley Road should be once again two-way from the Fish roundabout. Many of the units of Riverside Shopping Centre lose custom because of the one-way system. Inappropriate parking charges are also blamed. Consideration should also be

given to an underpass under the Fish roundabout from Bronze Age Way straight on to Queens Road. The necessity for this will be increased with the building of the Pro Logis interchange in Slade Green and the Incinerator in Belvedere, both of which will considerably increase the number of lorries using Queens Road and Bronze Age Way.

Finally it is fair to say that together with the passion for the Riverside green space, the type of housing to be built in Erith is the prime concern of the community and it was, therefore, interesting to read that a recent Government report openly criticised developers for designing dwellings with room sizes clearly not large enough to accommodate even the most modest needs of the proposed occupants in order no doubt to maximise numbers. The private offer was compared with social housing, which has to comply with government and local authority standards and consequently the properties offer much more appropriately sized rooms. Perhaps it is time that the government and local authorities apply the same standards for dwellings built for private sale.

Admissions Arrangements For Erith School

During August 'Rumours' had reached Erith Town Forum in respect of changes that were happening, or supposedly happening, at Erith School.

The Forum contacted the Chair of Governors, Mr. David Friend, (Chair since 1988) and a meeting was arranged between the new Head Teacher Mrs. Julie Turner, the Chair of Governors and two members of the Forum Management Team. We were supplied prior to the meeting with the background to the situation that Erith School has found itself in subsequent to their plans with the London Borough of Bexley to join in a Federation with the planned new Secondary School in Crayford.

During 2006 the London Borough of Bexley had received funds from the Department for Children, Schools and Families under the 'One School Pathfinder Project'. The Local Authority asked Erith School to work up the Federation Plan for a new school in Crayford. This plan however did not come to fruition and the London Borough of Bexley took the decision to set up an Academy instead. Erith School were left out of the loop in respect of this decision. However, Erith School would be vulnerable once the Academy was set up because Academies use fair banding for admissions. Historically where Academies are established in an area of low achievement-more able pupils are drawn from further afield. i.e. from Erith's traditional 'catchment area'. Conversely additional less able pupils who could not then gain places at the Academy might gain a place at Erith thus skewing the ability profile even more than it is and preventing Erith from achieving the necessary national academic benchmarks. Such schools

are then targeted for closure and or change of status.

Erith School would be particularly vulnerable because the other non selective Secondary Schools in the locality are 'ring fenced', The Bexley Business Academy (formerly Riverside School) Trinity (Church of England) St.Columba's and St Catherine's (Roman Catholic) Bexleyheath School (now a Trust School).

Erith School is a Foundation School, which means that the Governors and not the London Borough of Bexley have control of the admissions and the Governors took the decision to introduce an entrance test for all students applying for places at the school. There will be no reduction in the number of places at Erith School now or in the future. There will still be a twelve-form intake equal to 360 Pupils. (Currently pursued by 1000 potential entrants!)

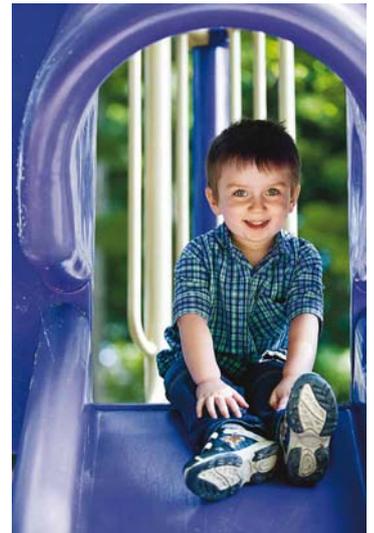
The Governors have chosen to use banding rather than call the bi-lateral part of the organisation a 'Grammar Stream'. This does not mean that pupils who have the ability will not be able to advance, as Band One will provide an opportunity as exists at present. In fact Erith School are introducing a non-verbal reasoning test for all potential admissions. This will allow the Head Teacher and her staff to ensure that a wide range of abilities are correctly absorbed into one of nine bands. As such there will be no need for pupils to have taken the Eleven Plus, as the admission test will check ability. It is anticipated that Erith will still take the same number of Special Educational Needs Pupils as they do currently.

It is reassuring to know that Erith School will continue to be the 'flagship' School of Bexley Borough.

Les Hoskins

Young Children Need a Pocket Play Area

There are now a large number of young families living in Carrack and Bosworth Houses, at the Riverside estate in Erith. There is also a lack of a small children's play area in the immediate vicinity. Mums have told me that a 'pocket park' would be an invaluable addition to facilities in Erith.



The old café area opposite Erith Riverside Gardens has been a no-go area for anti-social behaviour but thanks to the London Borough of Bexley's officers, it is now open and accessible to all. The mums believe this would be a good place for their park. A petition is currently being circulated and if you would like to sign it to show your support please contact me, **Maggie O'Neill** on 020 8301 3299.

Triforum Hits its 10th Birthday

Ten years ago a group of Erith people, concerned about the lack of activities for youngsters and the increase in anti-social behaviour, got together to find a solution.



Our plan was to communicate to local parents about events – particularly reasonable priced ones – happening in Bexley and to arrange sport and craft days for children. We were particularly concerned about children aged eight to 13 as research told us that this age group were more vulnerable to crime than others. The rest is history and I think that Triforum Youth can be proud that we led the way in providing a service for local people.

The next year will be spent putting ourselves on a charitable footing so that we can obtain funding from a wide range of organisations.

As usual, if any of our Town and Around readers would like to assist in our very worthwhile project, please contact me on 020 8301 3299.

Maggie O'Neill
Triforum Chair

Diary dates

Christ Church Erith will be holding their very popular **Christmas Tree Festival** on **December 11, 12 and 13**. On Saturday 12 December there will also be a Charities Christmas Fayre in the Church Hall. Refreshments will be available on all three days either in the Church or in the Church Hall

Erith Town Forum

Meeting dates for the Forum are as follows: Wednesdays 28 November, 27 January 2010, 31 March 2010, 19 May 2010 (AGM). Meetings are held in the Veterans Club, Park Crescent (corner of Glebe Way) from 7pm to 9pm.

If you have any news or dates for events to be included in the next newsletter, please contact erithtownforum@hotmail.com

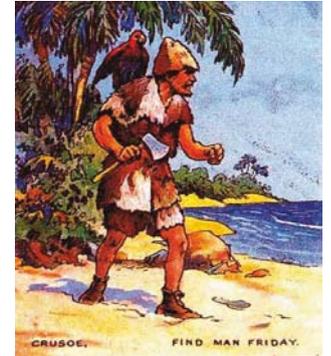
Seniors' Christmas Social Monday 14 December



On Monday 14 December in Christ Church Erith Hall we will be holding our annual Christmas event. This has become a regular event in the Erith calendar and again this year we will be providing mince pies and Christmas cake with hot cups of tea. There will be musical entertainment from The Good Companions followed by Bingo and a raffle. To book your place for the afternoon which will start at 2.00 pm, telephone Doreen Ives on 01322 345406 or contact erithtownforum@hotmail.com

The Real Robinson Crusoe Landed in Erith

Some Erithians, as local residents are sometimes called, may have wondered what the connection is between the 18th century adventure story Robinson Crusoe and our local streets, Friday Road, Crusoe Road and even Selkirk Drive? The key to this story is Alexander Selkirk on whose life, the Daniel Defoe story of Robinson Crusoe, was based. Selkirk first landed at Erith on his way back from a far island on October 14th, 1711.



Wouldn't it be great to bring people together and enjoy a truly historical happening right here in Erith?

If you would like to join in as an individual or an organisation please e-mail erithtownforum@hotmail.com or ring me, **Maggie O'Neill** on **0208 301 3299** and an exploratory meeting will be arranged for early in the New Year.

Erith Forum believes that we should be marking this exciting date with a 300th celebration. The event can be marked with music, art, entertainment and lots of other forms. The Forum is willing to be the hub for organising this BIG event.



Erith Playhouse

38-40 High Street, Erith, Kent. DA8 1QY

playhouse

Box Office: 01 322 350345

Book online: www.playhouse.org.uk

<p style="margin: 0;">Monday to Saturday 8pm</p> <p style="margin: 0;">30 Nov - 5 Dec 2009</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Tickets £7.50</p>	<p style="margin: 0;">Bell, Book and Candle</p> <p style="margin: 0;">by John Van Druten</p> <p style="margin: 0;"><i>An enchanting story of fantasy and witchcraft.</i></p>
<p style="margin: 0;">Saturday to Saturday</p> <p style="margin: 0;">2 - 16 January 2010</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Tues-Thurs £7.50</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Fri-Sun £9.00</p>	<p style="margin: 0;">Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs</p> <p style="margin: 0;">by Roger Butler</p> <p style="margin: 0;"><i>Full of Fun, Fantasy and Fine Family Entertainment.</i></p> <p style="margin: 0;">Earlier Performance Times for this production only: Tuesday – Friday 7.45pm</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Saturday 2.00pm, 5.00pm, 8.00pm</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Sunday 3.00pm</p>

Neighbourhood Panel Members

Our local community policing team under the direction of PS James Coomber are working hard to address the priorities identified by the Neighbourhood Panel members. They have been very successful and you can read about the work they have done on our website www.erithtownforum.org.uk

We are actively seeking more people to become members of the Erith Neighbourhood Police Panel. The panel meets

every three months for approximately two hours at the Erith Leisure Centre in Avenue Road. We discuss issues affecting the area and residents select 3 priorities for the Neighbourhood Team to work on. This is an excellent opportunity for you to have a direct impact on what your Police do. Please contact PS James Coomber on 020 8721 2048 if you wish to take part or e-mail us at Erith.SNT@met.police.uk.