

Council owned assets across Ct5 including the town centre

We are aware that our district council is looking at the assets they currently own across the district, including in CT5, and deciding what should happen to protect their public function after they transfer to the new unitary authority.

This process we understand is part of a town centre strategy Canterbury City Council (CCC) is devising for Whitstable (Herne Bay and Canterbury) in conjunction with consultants.

The Whitstable Society has kindly agreed to devise a list of council owned assets in the town which in its view the community values as its own and has done for some time. Our shared intention is to ensure that the community function of these buildings and spaces is retained and cannot be lost to the

community after the demise of our two local councils. Without such protection there is a real danger that after transfer day:



- 1. There's a freeze on new policy or strategy development for ~12 months (apart from the freeze pre-transfer of 12-months)*
- 2. Community-facing services and assets will be part of wider rationalisation reviews.*
- 3. The new authority may prioritise large capital receipts or rationalisation over local value.*

We are asking CCC to act now to protect these assets and enshrine that protection by your successor authority. It is clear that ownership transfer to perhaps ill-prepared community groups is not the only form of that protection and is both risky and limited.

CCC has an additional opportunity to use a combination of proper designation and policy embedding to ensure that asset transfer to the new unitary does not accelerate the risks of community loss, especially if the new authority is under financial pressure.

Policies at your disposal in addition to ownership transfer to the community include:

- *Asset of Community Value (ACV) listing: Even if imperfect, it buys time and sends a strong signal.*
- *Village Green registration (where applicable): Stronger legal protection from disposal or development.*
- *Article 4 Directions: Especially for open spaces, play areas, or culturally significant buildings in Conservation Areas.*
- *Planning designations: E.g. open space in the Local Plan, or protected frontage status.*
- *Community use clauses in transfer terms, where*

transfer is agreed in principle.

The Whitstable Society's intention is to prioritise a reasonable number of key sites and ask that you formally:

1. *Confirm the current ownership status and legal title.*
2. *Commit to protecting each asset in one of the above ways before vesting day.*
3. *Include them in a legacy schedule or charter annexed to your final LGR proposal.*

We also request that CCC appoint a dedicated asset transition lead or point of contact (if you haven't already). This is happening in other authorities now that the legal timetable is firming up.

Recognising the urgency of this process, both the Whitstable Society and Ct5 People's Forum stand ready to work with you to protect our community's assets.