



Ringwood Town News

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SOUTH WEST CORNER OF THE FURLONG

In the *Love it/Hate it* consultations on the Town Plan you said you wanted a public hall. The Town Council is backing the people of Ringwood by supporting Option 1 in the New Forest District Council's consultation on the future of The Furlong Car Park that you will be receiving shortly.

The Town Council has looked at the possibility of providing a public hall previously at Carvers Recreation Ground and on the sports field at Parsonage Barn Lane. Local opposition and cost have stopped both schemes. We have looked at other sites, including the old cinema, which was too small, but have not been able to find anything that we feel the town could afford without a massive increase in the council tax.

A new community building incorporating a hall

But that could all change. You now have the opportunity to encourage the District Council, which owns the Furlong Car Park, to construct the community facility you have asked for in the town centre with no increase in your council tax. It will include a new community building incorporating a hall, cinema/theatre facility and extra car parking within the site and retains the Plane trees.

Standing still is not an option. The retail sector will either grow or shrink. The Town Council believes that Ringwood should not become a dormitory town and therefore supports some managed growth. Our consultations show this is supported by all generations of Ringwood people and by the District's consultants who say that we need an additional 4,400 sq metres (45,000 sq feet) of retail space in the Town centre by 2018. The proposed extension of the existing Furlong Centre will not provide that amount of space.

The Town Council has looked carefully at the four options



offered by the District Council and believes that Option 1 has a huge advantage for the town over all the others. It will allow the community facilities you have asked for to be built without an increase in your council tax.

In reaching this decision the Council asked itself the simple question '**which of the four options will bring the greatest long term benefits and wealth to Ringwood's residents, retailers and the commercial sector without adversely affecting the natural character of the town?**' Councillors have also looked at each one to see whether any of them will be the source of regret in future years.

Historically we are well known as a Market Town to which people came from the outlying areas to trade. In those days trading took place in Markets, nowadays it is in shops. If Ringwood is to retain and enhance that tradition it must make sure that it has the capability and facilities to serve people from the outlying areas as well as its residents.

Councillors know it is vitally important for the character of the town to be retained. Any development must complement the historic nature of the town and the existing economic activity to create wealth for residents and businesses alike.

