



Sandgate Parish News

News and Information from Sandgate Parish Council

Sandgate Escarpment Special Edition - April 2018

More online at www.sandgatepc.org.uk and www.facebook.com/sandgatepc

The Two Towers

Sandgate Parish Council is consulting residents on an opportunity to purchase woodland on the escarpment, including two Martello Towers, to protect it from development.



Martello Towers 6 and 7 sit in woodland above Sandgate Village and are subject to planning consent to develop part of that woodland for housing and to convert the two Martello Towers into a dwelling house and a holiday home.

The Parish Council objected to that application and has now agreed terms with the owner with a view to conserving the towers for community use.

The Council would **not** implement the permission to build five homes. It would protect the site for its heritage and environmental benefits.

Inside, the Parish Council has published a detailed paper on the proposal and its costs so that residents can make an informed decision.

Residents of Sandgate are being consulted by referendum as to whether they support the proposal. **The vote will take part on Wednesday 9th May from 9am-9pm at Sandgate Library.**

Any local resident on the electoral roll can vote: just turn up. **Without a majority in favour of purchase, the purchase will not proceed.**

As a part of the public consultation process, there will be two public meetings on:

Thursday 26th April at 7 pm in the Chichester Memorial Hall;

Wednesday 2nd May at 3pm in the Sandgate Library.

Questions should be sent to Deputy Parish Clerk Peter Savage at clerk@sandgatepc.org.uk



What Will It Cost?

There is no way we can purchase the site for Sandgate unless we can pay for it.

We can pay for the site by taking a £500,000 loan, but the Parish Council need to be able to guarantee to repay the loan over its 50 year term.

The cost of repaying that loan would be added to the Council tax bill of all properties in Sandgate paying Council tax from April 2019.

For a Band D property it would be £9.75 a year or 19p per week per property. Based on the current precept of £75,986 this is an increase of 24.6%.

Pro-rata for other bands of property the increase would be between 13p a week for a Band A property and 38p a week at Band H.

For more details on the site, purchase, potential plans and costs, see inside.

YOU DECIDE. ESCARPMENT REFERENDUM.



Sandgate Woods and Martello Towers 6 & 7

The Proposal

Woodland site boundary marked. Tower locations shown by markers. Map from Google.

Introduction

1 Martello Towers 6 and 7 sit in woodland at the top of the Sandgate Escarpment. They were built as part of protection measures to prevent a Napoleonic invasion. Both Martello Towers are scheduled ancient monuments and grade 2 listed buildings. The woodland in which they are located is currently on the market for sale at a fixed price of £425,000. This includes planning permission for enabling development of five luxury houses at the eastern end of the woodland adjacent to Military Road, Sandgate.

2 The site has been offered to Sandgate Parish Council for purchase at an asking price of £375,000. The Parish Council have considered options for the purchase of this land and have determined that subject to a parish poll / referendum they would like to acquire the land for the following reasons and purposes:

- Firstly, the Parish Council, in reflecting local public opinion, have objected to the planning permission for the housing (and conversion of the Martello Towers for dwellings and holiday homes) and therefore the Parish Council are in a position to save the Martello Towers and woodland for community use
- The community uses could be wide & varied, e.g.:
 - Hosting exhibitions. Historic England advise that “only Martello No 24 at Dymchurch is

routinely open by English Heritage Trust as an authentic example. The setting of that tower has been compromised. It would be good to have other examples available for inspection/use by the public”.

- Encouraging local groups to use the towers themselves for events or the large moats within which they are located – e.g. scout camps and the like. Historic England advise that “how land within and around the scheduled monument might be used for community purposes would need to be agreed under a management plan but highly sensitive buried archaeology may not exist”.
- Social projects such as “Men in Sheds”
- Compatible fund raising uses for the Martello Towers which would provide ongoing finance for the day to day management of the towers and woodland could include hiring them for corporate away days or weekends or as wedding venues. This would of course be subject to the prior consent as outlined above. Applying appropriate conditions to any letting should be viable.
- The woodland would be preserved and developed as a local nature reserve. Such a reserve has been suggested by local residents repeatedly. Historic England advise that “the escarpment when the towers were built was treeless and to understand the significance of these tree management is needed to open up their setting for example by allowing views to the sea”. This would be consistent with wishes to open up picnic spots with sea views in appropriate locations.
- The Parish Council would work in partnership with a range of community and special interest



Roof of Martello Tower 6 with central gun emplacement

Proposal

3 The Parish Council has negotiated with the current land owner and a price of £355,000 has been agreed subject to contract. The Parish Council would seek to finance this by way of a loan from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB). It is hard to establish a firm value for this unique site but in coming to the view that £355,000 is a reasonable price the Parish Council has considered the following factors:

- The site was initially marketed for £750,000, now £425,000 fixed price
- The site had previously been agreed for purchase by a community venture for £500,000
- Individual Martello Towers have sold in recent years for £150,000
- Woodland sites of this size would have a value of around £100,000
- The opportunity cost of saving this site from the development

4 The Parish Council would seek additional monies of £145,000 in order to commence the significant works required to bring the Martello Towers back into community use and improve access to the woodlands, bringing the total loan to £500,000. The long term investment to bring the Martello Towers back into full community use would be up to £800,000, although this initial pot of money should be sufficient to commence the process. These initial works would include the following:

- Improving access to the woodland through development of the footpaths in conjunction with Kent County Council's public rights of way team
- Removing and recycling tree growth within the moat of Martello Tower 7 so as to make the tower more visible
- Creating a permanent access to the moat of Martello Tower 6 or 7
- Improvements to the World War 2 pill box located within the woodland

- Introduction of appropriate environmental improvements to encourage appropriate flora and fauna in liaison with DEFRA and the Environment Agency
- Encouraging archaeological digs through east Kent academic institutions

Finance

5 The Parish Council has sufficient funds in its 2018-19 budget to meet the first year's repayments of around £9,339. It would be funded from the major projects fund, which, with the contribution in 2018-19 of £20,000, will stand at £71,000.

The Parish Council would increase the precept from 2019-20 to provide a specific item in the base budget for the remaining years of the term of the loan. This increase would be the subject of a parish referendum to be conducted in May 2018.

Based on the current number of properties in the Parish Council area (2387) this would result in an average increase for a Band D property (the standard local government measure) of £9.75 per annum or 19p per week per property. This increase takes into account single occupancy discounts and current non-collection rates. Based on the current precept of £75,986 this increase is 24.6%.

Pro-rata, other bands would pay between 13p a week (£6.50 a year) more at Band A, to 38p a week more (£19.50 a year) at Band H.

Future

6 The Parish Council would then work with other bodies to raise further funds for further conservation works. Organisations to be approached would include the Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic England, the Martello Fund, Kent Community Foundation, the Roger De Haan Charitable Trust, National Trust, Kent Wildlife Trust as well as crowd funding options. This would be a very long term project requiring extensive planning and successful grant applications. If grant applications are unsuccessful or limited the phasing of the project would have to slow down. Any works to the Martello Towers would be undertaken in close consultation with Historic England who have been encouraging at this early stage.

7 In terms of ongoing maintenance, the Parish Council would set aside a budget for woodland management and for the day to day management of the two Martello Towers as community assets. The Parish Council would also seek to use income from sources such of corporate away days and weddings



Sandgate Escarpment Referendum

The Sandgate Escarpment referendum will take part on Wednesday 9th May from 9am-9pm at Sandgate Library.

We're afraid there is NO facility to vote by post or proxy. Only voting in person will be possible.

Any local resident on the electoral roll can vote: just turn up.

Without a majority voting Yes to the purchase, the purchase will not proceed.

Are you in FAVOUR of the Parish Council going ahead with the SANDGATE WOODS AND MARTELLO TOWERS PROJECT which will increase the precept (Parish Council element of the Council Tax) from April 2019 by £9.75 per annum or 19p per week for a Band D property (and other bands pro-rata) to pay off the PWLB loan?

Yes	
No	

You can also send in comments by email or in writing to the Parish Council at the addresses below. We really want to know what you think.

Escarpment Referendum Public Meetings

As a part of the public consultation process, there will be **two public meetings** on:

Thursday 26th April at 7pm

Chichester Memorial Hall,

70 Sandgate High Street

Wednesday 2nd May at 3pm

Sandgate Library, James Morris Court,

Sandgate High Street

There will be a detailed presentation and a chance to ask questions. The business case, including detailed finances, is available on request and on the Parish Council's website.

All welcome. Disabled access is easier at Sandgate Library with flat access from the pavement.

Sandgate Parish Council and Library is located at James Morris Court, Sandgate High Street, Sandgate CT20 3RR.

Parish Council office opening hours
9am - 1pm Monday to Friday.

We have recently extended opening hours to be open until

Library opening hours are:

- Monday, Friday & Saturday - 9.30am to 1pm.
- Tuesday and Thursday -