

Tunbridge Wells Alliance



Manifesto

OVERVIEW

Tunbridge Wells Alliance will direct all its efforts as a party, and through our councillors, to ensure that the Borough of Tunbridge Wells supports a healthy and well cared for community that can be proud of its carefully maintained and cherished environment.

We will ensure that a proper balance is struck between conservation and development, so that the borough remains an excellent place to live, work and visit, whilst keeping pace with the changing requirements of new generations.

Our detailed manifesto pledges are as follows.

DEMOCRACY

- Campaign to elect councillors who will listen to and respect the community.
- Create a council that reflects the views of its residents, rather than imposing its own views on them.
- Ensure that public consultations are made clearer and simpler.
- Offer members of the public proper time to promote their ideas and concerns, ask and answer questions, and debate issues.
- Campaign for increased opportunities for members of the public to present their views at committees and full council meetings.

PLANNING

- Improve the council's planning processes.
- Contentious applications should always be referred to the planning committee for a decision by councillors, rather than by council officers behind closed doors.
- Ensure that developments are carried out with proper regard to the impact on local infrastructure (roads, schools, medical facilities etc).
- Push the council to adopt the Community Infrastructure Levy to replace section 106 agreements. Developer contributions to local infrastructure improvements should relate to their development and to the wishes of the local community.
- Resist government pressure to build large scale housing developments in unsuitable locations. Do our best to protect green belt land and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Press for improvements to building regulations, to raise the standard of housing design, quality and sustainability.
- Halt the reckless conversion of commercial premises and offices into domestic accommodation.
- Ensure that developments across the borough are coordinated through proper town planning and neighbourhood plans. Listen to local people and organisations in the formulation of these plans.
- Resist the council spending more of taxpayers' money in developing its ill-judged and financially ruinous Calverley Square proposals.

HOUSING

- Push for the council to redirect money to address the chronic shortage of affordable homes through a programme of council house building.
- Encourage and support community-led housing delivery vehicles, such as community land trusts and co-housing projects.

WASTE

- Encourage the council to continue to improve its waste recycling programme.
- Resist the proposed charge for the collection of garden waste. The council is only imposing this charge as it wants to borrow £77 million for the Calverley Square proposals.
- Ensure that the council adopts a strategy for tackling the problem of single-use plastics and non-recyclable packaging.
- Encourage the council to find ways to deal with recycling at a more local level, for example by finding suitable locations for local composting centres for garden waste.

ROADS AND TRAFFIC

- Press for the council to take back control of its roads from Kent County Council, so that concerns such as repairs and traffic control can be prioritised locally.
- Aim to declutter our towns and villages from unnecessary street furniture and road signs, and prioritise the mending of pavements and verges.
- Lobby for a ban on HGVs using our rural lanes and villages as rat runs.
- Address the issue of excess traffic movements in Tunbridge Wells caused by the search for on-street parking spaces.
- Help stimulate the retail economy in Tunbridge Wells by offering 'first hour free' parking, or similar arrangements, in council owned car parks.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Support improvements to public rights of way to ensure a better network of cycle and bridleway routes in our rural parishes.
- Encourage the council to address the issue of airborne pollution and seek to find ways to improve air quality.

COMMUNITY

- Press for the continuation of the CCTV monitoring programme. This has made our streets safer, protected traders and enabled the police to obtain convictions for criminal offences. Seek a funding contribution from the police, as well as resisting any decisions taken by the council that put the financing of this at risk.
- Pressurise the council to continue with its community grants programme. This is now at risk because of the Calverley Square proposals. Lobby for the council to continue to support Citizens Advice Tunbridge Wells & District, which may have to close without council funding. Support local community initiatives throughout the borough by making small grants that can help turn these initiatives into realities.
- Support the cultural hub development, which has been partly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. This makes good use of the existing library, museum, and adult education centre buildings.
- Press for the refurbishment of the remaining civic buildings, including the town hall, Assembly Hall Theatre and police station, to ensure they are preserved for the public benefit. Take soundings from the public concerning the future use of these buildings.
- Put pressure on the owners of the old ABC cinema site to ensure that it is developed as soon as possible. The development should include a suitable community element.
- Ensure that the council takes into account the needs of all age groups when allocating resources, including teenagers and older people.

FULL BOROUGH APPROACH

- Ensure that the council does not neglect the concerns and requirements of our rural areas. Fair and proportionate resources should be allocated to these areas, including the three towns outside Tunbridge Wells and our many villages.
- Listen to the concerns of residents and employers in these locations. Ensure they are given full consideration when allocating resources across the borough.
- Liaise with, and strongly value, our local town and parish councils. These councils consist of elected individuals who give their time for no financial reward, and whose local knowledge and suggestions are invaluable to their local communities. Encourage the use of parish and neighbourhood plans to highlight local issues and preferences.

