

Shared Waste Team - NHC

WasteandRecycling@north-herts.gov.uk

07 November 2024

Dear Sirs

Proposed cuts to litter bin provision in Ashwell

Your letter of 28 October informed the Parish Council that you had conducted a case-by-case review of litter bin provision. Its aim was to identify a 30% reduction in numbers or greater and now NHC proposes to remove 8 of the 17 provided in Ashwell. This is a 47% cut.

There are sound reasons why Ashwell should be looking at a lesser, rather than a greater reduction than the 30% mentioned. None of these appear to be reflected in the arbitrary evaluation matrix that the surveyors used. The matrix is heavily focused on features of built-up environments rather than more rural areas that have different, but equally important issues related to conservation and the natural environment.

Specifically the matrix does not appear to recognise key sensitivities experienced here in Ashwell, such as: the needs of a Site of Special Scientific Interest, the existence of an extensive conservation area or its importance as a destination for visitors and holidaymakers.

This letter explains the circumstances that apply to Ashwell, why they are important and puts forward an alternative list of candidates for removal.

Site of Special Scientific Interest

There are two bins marked for removal at the entrances to Ashwell Springs: NHW995, High Street and NHW996, Springhead.

Ashwell Springs is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) close to the centre of the village. Around the district it is a popular destination for families at weekends and during holidays. It has a high footfall that must be carefully managed. The site is very sensitive to the impact of litter and significant quantities are deposited, particularly during good weather. Nevertheless the NHC survey considers both bins surplus to requirements. This is a serious failing of the assessment method used and the bins should remain.

The Parish Council also suggests that removing bins from outside an SSSI would not make good press.

Conservation area

A conservation area covers most of the village and it contains 70 listed buildings – the highest concentration of listed buildings in the district, and probably the county. All the bins NHC provides are in that area. The presence of litter has a severe detrimental impact

on the historic built environment and on the individual heritage buildings that sit within it. The presence of bins in prominent positions significantly mitigates the build-up of litter and degradation of an area worth conserving.

Bins around the High Street, Swan Street, Mill Street and Alms Lane are particularly important in this respect.

Visitors to the village

Ashwell is a popular destination for visitors, including holidaymakers staying at the two caravan sites in the Parish. There are well-worn walking routes around the village

This is important because visitors are attracted by pleasant surroundings and yet add to the burden of litter. Again, this is a situation apparently not reflected in NHC's assessment. As with the conservation area, bin removal will have a significant impact on the High Street, Swan Street, Mill Street and Alms Lane. Additionally, the walking route at the start of Partridge Hill (NHW555) up to the Arbury Banks Iron Age monument will be adversely affected.

Impact of inaccuracies in data collection

There are errors in the survey that may overstate the justification for bin reductions:

NHC reference	Location given by NHC	Comment
NHW1	Alms Lane	There is no litter bin at this location This may contribute to a false impression that there is an over provision in the general area.
NHW22	Ashwell footpath 009	There is a dog excrement bin at this location, not a litter bin. NHW22 is in the High Street opposite Bacon's Yard and the village store. The recorded location is quieter than its true location thereby giving a false impression.

When looking at the assessment against the matrix there appears to be an example where a criterion has not been correctly applied: bins NHW482 and NHW723 are both well-used but NHW482 has been given 'red' status, possibly it fails to score well because it is close to NHW723. However, the matrix states that, in rating distances to other bins, those on the opposite side of the road should be discounted. These bins are on opposite sides of the road and the nearest other is at very least 50 metres away (if the non-existent NHW1 bin is discounted).

Ashwell Parish Council's position

The Parish Council is concerned about the short time given for formulating a response to the proposals. You have allowed us a total of 10 working days and, given the tone of your communication, it looks like we are being presented with a *fait accompli*, "*However, it has been agreed that there will be a significant reduction in litter bins, and the team have been tasked for this to be completed by early next year.*" This is not a satisfactory situation.

That said, Ashwell Parish Council recognises the need to make savings wherever possible. It has done its own survey on provision and usage of litter bins over an extended period that takes into account fluctuations during the year. The Council’s proposed candidates for removal are:

NHC reference	Location given by NHC	Comment
NHW767	West End	Little pedestrian traffic along this short footpath, low usage.
NHW698	Station Road	This is next to the bus shelter but has shown consistently low usage.
NHW994	Ashwell Street	Although near the caravan site on a walking route this has shown consistently low usage.

We trust the Shared Waste Team will give serious consideration to the concerns raised and the alternative proposal the Council has put forward. Of course, we would be happy to provide further information if wanted.

Yours sincerely
Ashwell Parish Council

Clerk to APC Council

From: Shared Service Contract
Sent: 19 November 2024 13:04
To: clerk@ashwell.gov.uk;
Subject: RE: Litter bin In your District

Many thank for getting back to us with your comments on the reduction of litter bins in the Ashwell area, and your constructive feedback on locations and requirements of Ashwell.

After review of your comments, we will look to retain the litter bins NHW555 & NHW 995, and on your recommendation, we will look to remove NHW 698 (by the bus stop) to balance the overall quantity of proposed litter bins. If you do still have the requirement at the other exit to the springs NHW996, we can discuss this further however, we would need further consultation and suggestion from yourselves on swapping one of the amber coded bins to accommodate this request.



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Shared Service Contract
Manager Waste &
Recycling



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To: Shared Service Contract Manager Waste & Recycling

Dear XXXXXX

Thank you for getting back to me about the provision of litter bins in Ashwell. I have been in touch with councillors with your proposal and they welcome the fact that you are prepared to look at the wider issues rather than just stick to rigid criteria.

While they consider retention of bins outside the Springs (NHW995) and at the foot of Partridge Hill (NHW555) a helpful and essential move, there are still concerns about provision elsewhere.

Parish Council surveys carried out in the autumn and winter of 2022 and 2023 show that two other bins scheduled for removal show high levels of usage. Sampled at random times, i.e. not necessarily immediately before emptying, the average levels were half full – at times of year when few people are out and about in the village. We strongly support their retention. The two bins are:

- High Street South, across the road from Bacons Yard. This bin is labelled NHW22 and is next to a bus stop. Please note that your map shows this bin in the wrong place, at the junction of Back Street and the footpath to Dixies Close. This would have had a negative impact on your evaluation of its usefulness.
- Alms Lane next to the Parish Room, NHW723. This location is at the heart of the village right next to the museum and cottage garden.

If you were to accept our proposal it would still achieve a reduction of the bin count to your target of 30% - we would still be contributing to economies in line with other areas – but it would have a real benefit for the village environment. Please do consider this.

Kind regards,

Sally Roberts

Clerk

Ashwell Parish Council