

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

**Meeting held at Benslow Music Trust, Benslow Lane, Hitchin,
on 8 November 2005 at 7.30 p.m.**

PRESENT: *Councillors; Judi Billing (Chairman), Derek Sheard (Vice-Chairman)
Alison Ashley, David Billing, Paul Clark, Joan Kirby, Sandra Lunn,
Lawrence Oliver, R. Shakespeare – Smith, Martin Stears, R.A.C.
Thake and Sarah Wren.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Community Development Manager, Service Manager – Grounds
Maintenance, Parks and Countryside Development Manager,
Principal Planning Officer, Senior Planning Officer, Community
Development Officer, Project Co-ordinator for Community - Safety
and Committee Administrator.*

70. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and particularly the representatives from the Hitchin Youth Council and the lead petitioner concerning local bus service provision.

71. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Deepak Sangha.

72. MINUTES – 27 September 2005

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2005 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

73. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was tabled.

74. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Agenda Item 8 – Planning Applications

05/01262/1 – North Hertfordshire College, Cambridge Road, Hitchin.

Councillors Judi Billing and David Billing declared a prejudicial interest as they had a financial interest in a property in Browning Drive occupied by a member of their immediate family and would withdraw from the meeting for the duration of this item.

Councillor Derek Sheard declared a prejudicial interest in that he was resident in Browning Drive and would withdraw from the meeting for the duration of this item.

Councillor Sarah Wren declared a personal interest in that she was employed by North Hertfordshire College and would withdraw from the meeting for this item.

Councillor Sandra Lunn declared a personal interest in that she resided nearby to North Hertfordshire College and would remain at the meeting for this item, participate in the debate and vote.

Councillor R. Shakespeare – Smith declared a personal interest as the Council's representative on the Hitchin Sports Centre Management Committee and would remain at the meeting for this item, participate in the debate and vote.

05/01137/1 – North Hertfordshire College, Cambridge Road, Hitchin.

Councillor Sarah Wren declared a personal interest in that she was employed by North Hertfordshire College and would withdraw from the meeting for this item.

Councillor Sandra Lunn declared a personal interest in that she resided nearby to North Hertfordshire College and would withdraw from the meeting for this item.

Agenda Item 11 – King George V Playing Fields – Update on Skateboard Park

Councillor Paul Clark declared a personal interest in that he was a coach at Hitchin Rugby Club who used King George V Playing Fields and would remain for the duration of this item, participate in the debate and vote.

Councillors R.A.C. Thake, Martin Stears and Lawrence Oliver declared a personal interest as they were NHDC representatives on the Management Committee of the King George V Playing Fields and would remain for the duration of this item, participate in the debate and vote.

Agenda Item 13 – Rhythms of the World 2005 and future plans for 2006

Councillors Judi Billing and David Billing declared a prejudicial interest as a member of their immediate family was a regular performer at the ROTW festivals and would withdraw from the meeting for the duration of this item.

75. PRESENTATION OF A PETITION – LOCAL BUS SERVICES

The lead petitioner thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and expressed the concerns of the residents in Ninesprings Way, Hitchin on the latest revision to Arriva bus service no. 8/88 which did not provide a service to Ninesprings Way.

The lead petitioner confirmed that this petition had already been presented to the NHDC Scrutiny Committee and Hertfordshire County Council and requested that the Members of Hitchin Committee gave their support to the re-instatement of these bus services. The Committee noted the concerns of local residents in that to lose a service to the Lister Hospital at Stevenage was a very big problem as many residents relied on this service for out patients visits. It was the opinion of the petitioners that a five minute detour from the current Arriva 80 route could easily bring Ninesprings Way and Halsey Drive into service.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the formal receipt of the petition concerning the loss of bus passenger transport provision to the residents of Ninesprings Way and Halsey Drive, Hitchin be confirmed;
- (2) That the Hitchin Committee unanimously supported the aims of the petition and that every effort should be made to re-instate a bus service to Ninesprings Way and Halsey Drive, Hitchin.
- (3) That the Transport Policy Officer be requested to extend an invitation to Arriva and Centre Bus to the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 13 December 2005 to discuss the provision of bus services in Hitchin with specific reference to Ninesprings Way and Halsey Drive, Hitchin.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the current lack of provision of a passenger bus service to Ninesprings Way, Hitchin be considered by the Member Working Group as part of the review of bus service changes with Hertfordshire County Council and bus operators.

76. THE VOICE OF HITCHIN YOUTH

The representative of the Voice of Hitchin Youth thanked the Committee for the opportunity to provide some information. Rather than be known as the Hitchin Youth Council because of the perceptions with 'The Council' all concerned had agreed and it been proved successful to be known as the Voice of Hitchin Youth. The overall aim was to improve Hitchin for young people, three secondary schools had been visited, a web site would be ready soon, an under 18 event will be held at Club 85 on 17 December and every third Saturday in the month thereafter. A bank account has been opened and a constitution prepared. Of particular note had been successful involvement in the skateboard park at King George V playing fields and good interaction with the Hitchin CDO.

On behalf of the Committee the Chairman congratulated all concerned with the development of the Voice of Hitchin Youth and wished them every success. The Chairman extended an invitation to address the Committee at future meetings and to the next Town Talk on 13 December 2005.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representatives of the Voice of Hitchin Youth be thanked for their presentation and congratulated on their achievements to date;
- (2) That an open invitation be extended to the representatives of the Voice of Hitchin Youth to attend meetings of the Hitchin Committee and especially at the Town Talks.

REASON FOR DECISION

To continue engagement with the Voice of Hitchin Youth and encourage involvement in the development of Hitchin.

77. HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS

The Chairman advised the Committee that Hertfordshire Highways would not be attending this meeting as had been requested. The Chairman confirmed that the North Hertfordshire District Manager would be attending the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 13 December 2005 with details of the Draft Enhanced Highway Maintenance Programme, Highways – Integrated Works Programme 2006/2007 and Forward Work Programme 2007/2011.

78. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee heard oral presentations as follows:

Application Ref. 04/01107/1 – M & J Plant Hire Depot, Cadwell Lane, Hitchin.

Mr S. Milliken spoke as the objectors' representative.

Application Ref. 05/01262 – North Hertfordshire College, Cambridge Road, Hitchin, (all weather pitch).

Eileen Wallace spoke as the objectors' representative.

Application Ref. 05/01268/1 – Land at 15, 17 and 19 Old Hale Way, Hitchin.

Mr M. Annetts spoke as the objectors' representative and presented a petition concerning local residents' concerns as to this planning application.

Mr D. Gibson spoke as the applicant's representative.

Application Ref. 05/01241/1 – Land off Walsworth Road (adjacent to B&Q store and rear of 59-69 Dacre Road, Hitchin.)

Ashley Walker spoke as the objectors' representative.

RESOLVED to determine the planning applications as set out in the report of the Planning and Control conservation Manager and as indicated in the following schedule:

Reference Number	SCHEDULE Description of Development and Location	Decision
04/01107/1	M & J Plant Hire Depot, Caldwell Lane. Hitchin. SG4 Residential development comprising of two and three storey flats and houses providing 67 dwellings (36 two bedroom flats, 6 two bedroom , 14 three bedroom and 11 four bedroom houses). New vehicular access following closure of existing Estate road, garages, parking spaces, childrens' play area and ancillary works (as amplified by Travel Assessment and Acoustic Report received 02.11.2004, Flat type 635A received 14.03.05, updated Acoustic Report received 31.03.05, amended plans Nos. 8182.006G & 5011.1553 received 27.06.05).	Refused (see (a) below)

Reference Number	SCHEDULE Description of Development and Location	Decision
05/01262/1	North Hertfordshire College, Cambridge Road, Hitchin. SG4 0JD All weather sports pitch with six 13 metre floodlight columns, earth bund and acoustic fence, landscaping, access road and disabled parking spaces.	Conditional Permission (see (b) below)
05/01268/1	Land at 15,17 and 19 Old Hale Way, Hitchin. SG5 Residential development comprising two pairs of semi-detached dwellings and three bedroom terraced dwellings in two blocks, 7 covered parking spaces and 14 open parking spaces, access road and landscaping following demolition of 17 and 19 Old Hale Way.	Refused (see (c) below)
05/01137/1	Land at North Herts College, Willian Road, Hitchin, SG4 0UJ Outline Application for 71 dwellings (60 one and two bedroom flats/maisonettes and 11 three bedroom houses), 97 parking spaces, alterations to existing vehicular access off Willian Road (design, external appearance and landscaping details reserved) following demolition of existing buildings. (As amended by revised site layout drawing No. 15469/1013B received on 23 August 2005).	Conditional Permission (as per report)
05/01268/1	Land off Walsworth Road (adjacent to B & Q Store and rear of 59-69 Dacre Road, Hitchin, SG5). Residential development comprising of 11 one bedroom & 82 two bedroom flats in 2 blocks of 3, 4 & 5 storeys over a semi-basement parking area for 87 vehicles. 9 two bedroom & 3 three bedroom 2 storey terraced houses with 13 parking spaces. New vehicular & pedestrian access via Walsworth Road. Emergency vehicle access & pedestrian access via existing driveway between 64 & 66 Dacre Road. Landscaping & ancillary works. (approval of siting, design and external appearance details pursuant to outline permission ref. 03/00959/1 granted 21 June 2005).	Refused (as per report)

(a) That with regard to planning application reference 04/01107/1 it be **RESOLVED** that permission be **REFUSED** as per the recommendation set out in the report of the Head of Planning and Building Control Services with an additional condition as follows:

(2) Having regard to the allocation of this site for employment purposes in the District Local Plan No. 2 with alterations of its release for residential purposes would be premature until the results of the Council's current Employment Land Study are known.

(b) That with regard to planning application reference 05/01268/1 it be **RESOLVED** that permission be **GRANTED** as per the conditions set out in the report of the Planning Control and Conservation Manager and one additional condition:

- (12) All construction work associated with the development hereby approved shall be restricted to between the hours of 7.30am and 6.00pm Mondays to Fridays and between the hours of 8.00am and 1.00pm on Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of nearby residential occupiers.

(c) That with regard to planning application reference 05/01268/1 it be **RESOLVED** that permission be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

- (1) The proposed development, by reason of its backland nature and terraced character, would not satisfactorily integrate into the established character and form of the locality contrary to Policy 1 and Policy 57 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with alterations.
- (2) Inadequate amenity space would be provided for the new dwellings, which would be particularly acute given the nature of the area. The development would therefore be contrary to the guideline standards as set out in Policy 57 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations.
- (3) The development would be result in the proposed properties at the rear of the site being unduly overshadowed by existing mature trees, which are outside the application site. The development would therefore be contrary to Policy 57 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations.
- (4) The development would adversely affect the privacy and amenity of the occupiers of adjoining property by reason of the rear facing dormer windows on plots 3-10 inclusive. The development would therefore be contrary to Policy 57 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations.

79. PLANNING APPEALS

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that one appeal had been lodged since the meeting of this Committee held on 27 September 2005.

Appellant	Kim Trading Ltd.
Address	99-100 Ickleford Road, Hitchin.
Description	Extensions to provide internal retail space on ground floor with 6 two bedroom flats over Ref. 05/01216/1
Procedure	Written representations.

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that one appeal had been determined since the meeting of this Committee held on 27 September 2005.

Appellant	Hitchin Caravan Centre
Address	Hitchin Caravan Centre, Cambridge Road, Hitchin.
Description	Use of land as extension to centre Ref. 04/01052/1
Decision	Appeal DISMISSED on 7 October 2005.
Committee/Delegated	Delegated
Comments	None

80. ALCOHOL FREE ZONES

The Project Co-ordinator for Community Safety advised the Committee of previous discussions held at Hitchin and Royston Committee concerning alcohol free zones and that Cabinet at its meeting held on 20 September 2005 (Minute 86 refers) had requested a district wide assessment of the feasibility of alcohol zones before the end of the Civic Year 2005/2006. Although Scrutiny at its meeting held on 11 October 2005 (Minute 69 refers) had requested Cabinet to defer the implementation of alcohol free zones to await the effect of the change in the licensing laws and any impact of a Royston Alcohol Free Zone, Cabinet at its meeting held on 18 October 2005 (Minute 98 refers) had agreed that to ensure parity across the district each Area Committee would be invited to consider this issue.

The Project Co-ordinator provided details of street drinking, drunkenness and alcohol related offences in Hitchin and that the specific Hitchin locations were Market place, Windmill Hill and Bancroft Gardens with most incidents at the weekend. The Committee noted that there was no evidence of signification confiscations of drink from under age young people in Hitchin.

The Committee noted that consultation with members of the public and ward councillors would take place and an indicative map would be produced for Hitchin showing 'hotspots'. However, further consultation with Hertfordshire Constabulary would be necessary to define such alcohol free zones and the provision of police officers to patrol such zones.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided on the feasibility of alcohol free zones be noted;
- (2) That the resolution made by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 11 October 2005 '*That the consideration of implementation of Alcohol Free Zones across the District be deferred for a year to await the effect of change in the Licensing laws and the impact of the Royston Alcohol Free Zone should it be decided to proceed with its implementation*' be endorsed by the Hitchin Committee;
- (3) That the Project Co-ordinator for Community Safety be requested to place in the Spring 2006 issue of Outlook an article about Alcohol Free Zones with a request for evidence of street drinking, drunkenness and alcohol related offences;
- (4) That the request for a grant allocation of £600 for the placement of a Public Notice in the local press be deferred to the 2006/2007 financial year.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

To consider the implementation of alcohol free zones in order to severely restrict the level of on street drinking and the element of antisocial behaviour which was drink related.

81. KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELDS – UPDATE ON SKATEBOARD PARK

The Parks and Countryside Development Manager reminded the Committee that at its meeting held on 7 December 2004 (Minute 85 refers) support had been recorded for the development of a skateboarding facility at King George's Recreation Ground. Since that meeting a local user group had been formed and consultation had been made with; local skateboarders, Hitchin Rugby Club, Hitchin Scouts, Local schools, Local residents and Ward Members. With assistance from a specialist company the design for the skateboard facility presented at Appendix A was before the Committee for consideration.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the skateboard facility was its location and the Parks and Countryside Development Manager provided details of three sites as shown graphically at Appendix B. Following discussion of each site the Committee agreed that Location B would be the best site as it was on an existing basketball court. The Manager confirmed that a new multi-games area was planned for this recreation ground in 2006 and the old basketball court would become redundant. Location B was screened by a large hedge, was some distance from school buildings and some secondary lighting would come from existing floodlights at Hitchin Rugby Club.

The Parks and Countryside Development Manager confirmed that the cost of this scheme was contained within the 2005/2006 capital budget for the provision of youth facilities.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the design for the skateboard facility as presented at Appendix A to the report be agreed;
- (2) That the proposed location of the skateboard facility as indicated at Option B and presented at Appendix B be agreed;
- (3) That the NHDC Community Safety Scheme and the North Hertfordshire Crime Prevention Officer be requested to work with local schools to investigate options which would improve the security of schools and school grounds.
- (4) That the Community Development Officer be requested to convey the thanks of the Hitchin Committee to the youngsters who had participated at all stages of the skateboard park programme.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

To meet the Council's strategic objective of the promotion of first class leisure and cultural facilities to contribute to healthy living for all our citizens. And to implement the work programme Council's Play Area and Outdoor Youth Provision strategy.

82. BANCROFT GARDENS – UPDATE ON VEHICULAR ACCESS

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport through the Chairman requested that a decision on this item be deferred until the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 13 December 2005.

The Portfolio Holder advised the Committee that he had received representation from users of the tennis courts, bowling green and pavilion. All users had accepted the need for a form of restriction to deter unauthorised users of Bancroft Gardens as a general car park, but, wished to have further discussions with officers concerning the proposals and location for a barrier and the siting of parking bays for disabled drivers.

Following a short discussion and comment from representatives of the bowling club it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That this item be deferred to allow further consultation with users of the sports facilities and the Bancroft Pavilion;
- (2) That the Service Manager – Grounds Maintenance be requested to convene a meeting at Bancroft Recreation Ground as soon as possible with representatives of users of the facilities at Bancroft Recreation Ground to discuss the proposed changes to car parking and the location of a security barrier and disabled car parking bays and consider alternatives.

Note: This meeting took place on 23 November 2005.

- (3) That the Service Manager – Grounds Maintenance be requested to present at the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 13 December 2005 a final report with detailed plans of the proposed barrier, disabled parking bays and operational procedures for the users of the recreation ground and pavilion.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To meet the Council's strategic objectives.

83. RHYTHMS OF THE WORLD 2005 AND FUTURE PLANS FOR 2006

The Community Development Manager reminded the Committee that the 2005 ROTW Festival had taken place over the weekend of 9 and 10 July. The excellent weather had boosted the attendance to approximately 30,000 over the two days, an increase of 5000 from 2004. The Committee noted that a debrief with all concerned had taken place on 15 September 2005 and the Community Manger provided a summary of the debrief with a wide ranging list of Conclusions and Suggestions as presented at Paragraph 4 including the extra ordinary amounts of litter that had to be collected, bagged and taken for disposal.

The 2006 ROTW Festival is planned to take place on the weekend of 15 and 16 July and the Festival Committee had agreed to review the issues and suggestions for improvement as detailed at Paragraph 4 to the report with the major issue of attendance in such high numbers being to the fore. Due consideration would be given to restricting publicity to local media rather than a regional cover which would promote the aim of a local community event. The Community Manger requested that the Hitchin Committee agree in principle the same financial support as in 2005 of £10,000 to be allocated from the 2006/2007 discretionary budget.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the organisers of the 2005 Rhythms of the World Festival be congratulated upon the success of the event and providing entertainment to all;
- (2) That the officer conclusions and suggestions for future action as detailed at Paragraph 4 to the report be noted;
- (3) That the Hitchin Committee supports the proposal to use Butts Close as a designated car park in 2006 subject to satisfactory discussions and consultation with local organisations that have an interest in the land at Butts Close;
- (4) That a grant of £10,000 be made in principle from the 2006/2007 Discretionary Budget to allow planning of the 2006 ROTW Festival proceed.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To continue the support of the Hitchin Committee for the annual ROTW festivals.

84. HITCHIN VISIONING

The Community Development Officer (CDO) reminded the committee the Visioning Action Plan was agreed for implementation as Year 1 of a three year programme at the meeting held on 2 November 2004 (Minute (69) refers). The CDO referred the Committee to the updated Action Plan at October 2005 as presented at Appendix A.

The Committee noted the key achievements as shown in the Action Plan and that at the recent meeting of the Hitchin Visioning Chairs the following actions had been proposed for implementation: Continued support for The Voice of Hitchin Youth, The launch of a Community Centre booklet, A proposal to make Windmill Hill accessible for disabled persons and users of wheelchairs and buggies and to develop further the 'Why recycle' campaign.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That progress on Area Visioning to date be noted;
- (2) That the items prioritised in the Area Visioning Action Plan for 2006/2007 for implementation be agreed;

- (3) That the sum of £1500 be allocated from the Hitchin Visioning Budget to provide support to the Voice of Hitchin Youth at a 'bonding' weekend to be held in the Spring of 2006;
- (4) That the sum of £700 be allocated from the Hitchin Visioning Budget to cover the costs and launch of a Community Centre Leaflet.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To allow the Hitchin Committee participate in the implementation and review process of Area Visioning and make recommendations as to the allocation of resources for the implementation of activities in the Action Plan.

85. CHAMPION NEWS

The Community Development Officer (CDO) provided an update on the following activities: Wheeled sports facility at Walsworth Common; Westmill Community Centre – Young People; A bike dirt track at Ransoms Recreation Ground; Healthy Walks Programme; summer Playschemes and Sports Courses; Hitchin Town Centre road closures before Christmas; Disabled access to Windmill Hill and Tree replanting at Butts Close.

The Committee thanked the CDO for the update and noted that it would be possible to close the High Street on the Sundays leading up to Christmas. A short discussion was held on the replanting of trees at Butts Close with particular reference to species and the viability of a disabled access from Queen Street to Windmill Hill and it was agreed that additional information was required before a decision could be made.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided by the Community Development Officer on activities since the meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 27 September 2005 be noted;
- (2) That the Community Development Officer be requested to present a report to a future meeting of the Hitchin Committee which would provide various options and an estimate of costs to gain access to Windmill Hill;
- (3) That the Community Development Officer be requested to provide further details on the species of replacement trees at Butts Close at the meeting to be held on 13 December, with funding allocated from the Visioning Budget.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To ensure that the Hitchin committee are kept informed of the activities of the Community Development Officer.

86. GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT BUDGET 2005/2006

RESOLVED: That the 2005/2006 funds in the Visioning Budget of £5,380, the Central Development Budget of £240 and the total Ward Development Discretionary Budget of £11,120 be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To advise the Hitchin Committee of funds available for disbursement in the year 2005/2006.

87. HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER

The Hitchin Town Centre was pleased to advise the Committee that the bid for a £10,000 bursary to develop a Community Interest Company had been successful. He had been in discussions with the NHDC Licensing and Enforcement Manager concerning an application for the Town Centre Manager to be a premises licence holder for Hitchin town centre and this would cover the majority of events held for example in Market Square. A market would be held on 11 and 18 December in Market Square with the Christmas lights 'switched on' at 5p.m. on 3 December and a Carol concert on 21 December.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided by the Hitchin Town Centre Manager be noted;
- (2) That the Hitchin Town Centre Manager be congratulated on the award of a £10,000 bursary from the East of England Development Agency and that the Hitchin Committee supported the proposal to use Hitchin Town Hall as a centre for community engagement by way of a Community Interest Company.

The meeting closed at 10.36 p.m.

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Chairman