

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

Meeting held at Benslow Music Trust, Benslow Lane, Hitchin,
on 4 July 2006 at 7.30p.m.

MINUTES

PRESENT: Councillors: Derek Sheard (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), Alison Ashley, David Billing, Paul Clark, Joan Kirby, Bernard Lovewell, Lawrence Oliver, Deepak Sangha, Martin Stears, R.A.C. Thake and Sarah Wren.

IN ATTENDANCE: Steve Crowley-Projects Manager-Leisure Division,
Graham Haerle- Principal Planning Officer,
Tom Rae – Senior Planning Officer,
Margaret Bracey-Community Development Officer,
Nigel Schofield – Committee Administrator.

Note: Councillor Alison Ashley left the meeting at 10.23 p.m.

Note: The meeting adjourned at 8.34 p.m. for evacuation due to a false fire alarm and re-convened at 8.55 p.m.

18. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Derek Sheard (Vice-Chairman) confirmed that the Chairman Councillor Judi Billing had tendered her apologies for this meeting and that he would be Chairman for this meeting.

The Chairman welcomed the speakers at Agenda Item 8 – Planning Applications

The Chairman announced that there would be an additional item before the Committee concerning the promotion of Hitchin Market and that this item would be taken after Agenda Item 6.

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillors: Judi Billing and R. Shakespeare – Smith.

20. MINUTES – 16 and 30 May 2006

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meetings held on 16 and 30 May 2006 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

21. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Agenda Item 8 – Planning Applications

Ref. 06/00741/1 - Land at 41-111 Milestone Road, Hitchin.

Councillor Joan Kirby declared a prejudicial interest as she was a Board Director to North Hertfordshire Homes and that she would leave the room for the duration of this item.

Agenda Item 11 – Champion News

Hitchin Visioning Capital – Enhancement of facilities at Bancroft Gardens.

Councillors Paul Clark and Sarah Wren declared a personal interest as Directors of the Caldicott Centre, and confirmed that they would remain for this item and reserved the right to speak and vote.

22. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: PRESENTATION OF A PETITION

An anticipated petition concerning traffic issues in Wilbury Way, Hitchin, was not presented to the meeting.

RESOLVED: That, should such a petition emerge in the near future, it would be received by the Democratic Services Manager and a report on the matter would be

prepared for the next meeting in liaison with Cllr. R.A.C.Thake.

23. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – RHYTHMS OF THE WORLD 2006

The representative from Rhythms of the World provided an update on the activities planned for the weekend of 15 and 16 July and made a specific invitation to all Members of the Committee to attend music workshops at Bancroft and Christ Church Hall on Saturday 15 July.

RESOLVED: That the information provided on the Rhythms of the World 2006 and the invitation to music workshops be noted.

24. NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S MARKETS ACTION PLAN - HITCHIN

The Projects Manager – Leisure (PML) advised the Committee that Officers and Councilors had met on a regular basis with the Hitchin Market Traders Association, initially to discuss the day to day operation and latterly discussions on new initiatives that would improve the current position of Hitchin Market.

One of the outcomes of these meetings was the preparation of an Action Plan and the PML referred the Committee to Appendix A which indicated targets and target dates for the development of Hitchin Market.

The Committee reviewed the Action Plan, noted that several of the targets had been achieved and that the PML met weekly with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and e – Government and the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services to discuss progress.

In response to an enquiry the PML confirmed that discussions with a candidate for the post of Markets Manager had reached an advanced stage and references were to be taken up. The PML advised the Committee that signage for markets in North Hertfordshire were included in the overall Action Plan, nevertheless the Committee considered that it would be appropriate for the Hitchin Market Action plan to include the provision of signage at pedestrian and vehicle approaches to Hitchin.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided on targets and target dates in the Hitchin Market Action Plan as presented at Appendix A be noted;
- (2) That the Hitchin Market Action Plan as presented at Appendix A should include the provision of signage on the vehicular and pedestrian approaches to the Market.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To allow the Hitchin Committee continue its support for Hitchin Market and ensure the delivery of the Hitchin Market Action Plan.

25. HITCHIN MARKET – FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PROMOTION AND ADVERTISING

Reason for urgency: To allow the promotion of the Hitchin Market prior to the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee in order to keep to a minimum the potential loss of financial investment.

The Projects Manager – Leisure (PML) advised the Committee that one of the targets set out in the Action Plan was the implementation of a £10 stall rental at the Tuesday Market and £15 stall rental at the Saturday Market and associated promotion and advertisements. The PML confirmed that during the meeting of Cabinet held on 27 June 2006 (Minute 17 refers) a suggestion was made that the Hitchin Committee could consider a contribution to the funding of a promotional campaign for Hitchin Market from their Discretionary Budgets. The Committee noted that any changes to stall rentals in the form of a subsidy had to be approved by Council at the meeting to be held on 27 July 2006.

The PML advised the Committee that the estimated cost of advertising in the national market trader media was £4,300 and that the Hitchin Committee be invited

to make a grant of £2,000 as per paragraph 4.3 to the report.

The Committee were concerned that advertising in the market trader media would not be sufficient to increase awareness of Hitchin Market despite regular promotion advertisements in the Comet Newspaper. Members wished to see a wider coverage outside North Hertfordshire and that Press Releases to newspaper editors to encourage feature articles on North Herts Markets should be issued.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That an award of £2,000 be made from the Hitchin Development Budgets for 2006 - 2007 as a contribution towards the costs of placing advertisements in the national market trader media;
- (2) That the Chairman, Vice – Chairman, the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services and Project Manager – Leisure meet as soon as possible to discuss virement of budgets to accommodate the above grant, and the additional cost of advertising in other media
- (3) That the Projects Manager – Leisure and the Head of Communications and Public Relations prepare a series of Press Releases to increase the promotion usage and awareness of markets in North Hertfordshire.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To allow sufficient advertising can be placed in the national market trader media to promote the proposed charges for the Tuesday and Saturday markets at Hitchin.

26. NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL – PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The Projects Manager – Leisure (PML) referred the Committee to Minute 7 from the meeting of Cabinet held on 6 June 2006 as presented at paragraph 3.1. The PML confirmed that Cabinet at its meeting on 6 June had approved the capital expenditure to make the necessary improvements to the current public conveniences in Hitchin.

The Committee noted that improvements were to be made to the Hitchin Arcade Public Conveniences in lieu of the proposed new units for Market Place, Hitchin and Mosses Corner, Hitchin without amendment to the overall contract price. In addition, the Committee noted that the public conveniences at Bancroft, Hitchin would be closed once the refurbishment to the public conveniences at the Arcade, Hitchin had been completed.

The PML described the works to be undertaken in Hitchin at: The Market, Bancroft and The Arcade as described at paragraph 4.1 with confirmation that public conveniences at Portmill Lane would be closed. The PML referred the Committee to Appendix A which included details of all works to public conveniences in North Hertfordshire and in detail concerning Hitchin presented on pages 8 – 19 and pages 48 – 51 (costs) of the Appendix.

After receiving the report the Committee entered into a long debate on the proposals for closure and refurbishment of public conveniences and were extremely concerned at the lack of prior consultation despite the request of Cabinet at its meeting held on 17 May 2005 (Minute 7 refers) that Area Committees should be consulted on the proposals. The Committee noted the comments and clarification made by Councillor R.A.C. Thake concerning this approach to the programme of works for public conveniences in North Hertfordshire and it was agreed that Cabinet should review all cost estimates. Of particular concern was the cost estimate of £208,500 for works at the Arcade (West Alley) which was thought to be very high and that alternative cost estimates should be sought from an approved list of contractors.

During the debate the Committee made counter proposals for the provision of public conveniences (see (4) below) with a specific reference to toilets provided for people with disabilities especially at Portmill Lane and the Arcade (West Alley) as there were parking bays specifically placed at Portmill Lane and in West Alley for disabled drivers.

RESOLVED: That the strategic decision taken by Cabinet (at its meeting held on 6

June 2006, Minute 7 refers) concerning the public conveniences located in Hitchin be noted;

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) That Cabinet be advised of the concerns expressed by this Committee in that this was the first occasion when proposals for public conveniences had been presented to Area Committees as per the recommendation from Cabinet at its meeting held on 17 May 2005 (Minute 7 refers);
- (2) That the Portfolio Holder for Waste Management and Environment be requested to review with officers the cost estimates for the proposed works to all public conveniences in Hitchin;
- (3) That the cost estimate of £208,500 for the refurbishment of the Arcade public conveniences be closely examined as to accuracy and 'value for money';
- (4) That Cabinet be requested to note the recommendations for public conveniences in Hitchin as follows:
 - That the Bancroft Public Convenience should be refurbished;
 - That the Arcade (West Alley) should be refurbished and provided with a disabled toilet;
 - That part of the public convenience at Portmill Lane be converted to provide a disabled toilet only;
 - That the Market public convenience should be refurbished;

REASON FOR DECISION:

To ensure the delivery of the project objectives for the improvements and the retention of public conveniences in Hitchin.

27. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

RESOLVED: That a vote of thanks be recorded in respect of the support provided by Senior Planning Officer Tom Rea to the Hitchin Committee and that every best wish be offered for his tenure as the Royston Area Planning Officer.

The Committee heard oral presentations as follows;

Application Ref. 05/00741/1 – Land at Brookers Yard, Suzuki and Peter Fish premises off Paynes Park, Hitchin.

Mr Chris Parker – Joint Chairman of Keep Hitchin Special and Chris Honey of Hitchin Forum spoke as objectors to the application.

Mr Stephen Boniface spoke as the applicant's architect.

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

Reference Number	SCHEDULE	
	Description of Development and Location	Decision
06/00734/1HH	Land at 22 Dale Close, Hitchin SG4 9AS Front dormer window	Withdrawn

06/00741/1	Land at 41-111 Milestone Road, Hitchin SG5 Demolition of 88 – 111 Milestone Road, (Phase II); residential redevelopment of 41 – 111 Milestone Road to provide affordable housing consisting of 6 one-bedroom flats, 12 two-bedroom flats, 2 two bedroom bungalows, 13 two bedroom houses, 6 three bedroom houses and 2 for bedroom houses together with new accesses and ancillary parking and landscaping (as amended by plan no. 1416 – 010 Rev. A received 21 June 2006).	Conditional Permission (see (a) below)
05/00741/1	Land at Brookers Yard, Suzuki and Peter Fish premises, off Paynes Park, Hitchin. 2, 3 and 4 storey buildings together with conversion of part of existing Carling Building and Building B to provide 148 residential units: 28 one bedroom and 104 two bedroom flats; 1 one bedroom, 12 two bedroom and 3 three bedroom houses. Basement parking for 175 cars and cycle storage. Use of part of existing Carling Building for retail purposes (272 sq.m.). Two separate points of vehicular access via Paynes Park following closure of existing. Service access to ground floor loading bay rear of Brookers via Market Place. Landscaping and ancillary works. (As amended by plans received 17 January 2006, 17 March, 20 May and 13 June 2006).	Refused (see (b) below)

(a) That with regard to planning application reference 06/00741/1 that permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following additional conditions:

(13) Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved details of a Local Area for Play (LAP) to be provided within the development site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the details so approved, and thereafter permanently maintained.

Reason: To ensure that the development makes adequate playspace provision for the occupiers of the proposed dwellings.

(14) Before occupation of the approved development all access roads, junction arrangements with Milestone Road, parking areas and turning area serving the development as shown on in principle drawing number 1416-010 Rev. A should be completed to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority.

Reason: To ensure the accesses are constructed to the current Highway Authority's specification in the interest of highway safety and amenity.

(15) The access works shall not be commenced until detailed plans are submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority.

Reason: To ensure the accesses are constructed to the current Highway Authority's specification in the interest of highway safety and amenity.

- (16) Before occupation of the proposed development the proposed bus shelter shall be constructed to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the bus shelter is constructed to the current Passenger Transport standards.

- (17) The bus shelter works shall not be commenced until detailed plans are submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the bus shelter is constructed to the current Passenger Transport standards.

- (18) All parking and vehicle movements associated with the demolition of existing dwellings on this site must be provided on land which is not public highway and the use of such areas must not interfere with the use of the public highway.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety during demolition of existing buildings.

- (19) The construction of the development shall not commence until details of construction vehicle movements and traffic management measures are submitted to and approved by the Local Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority.

Reason: To ensure the impact of construction vehicles on the local road network is minimised.

- (20) Before the commencement of site works, the method of washing of vehicle wheels exiting the site shall be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority and the agreed method shall be operated at all times during the period of site works.

Reason: In the interest of highway safety and amenity.

- (21) All areas for parking, storage and delivery of materials associated with construction of the development shall be provided within the site on land which is not public highway and the use of such areas must not interfere with the use of the public highway.

Reason: In the interest of highway safety.

- (a) That with regard to planning application reference 05/00741/1 that permission be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

- (1) By reason of the mass of the individual blocks and the height of those adjacent to existing properties in Tilehouse Street, the proposal would not be in harmony with the scale of the area and thus would not maintain or enhance the character and appearance of the Hitchin Conservation Area. The application does not as a consequence accord with the Council's adopted Paynes Park Planning Brief February 2005 or Policy 18 of the District Local Plan with Alterations.

- (2) The proposed development does not adequately promote ground floor uses to make the layout more attractive to people and thereby increase footfall and as a consequence does not accord with the Council's adopted Paynes Park Planning Brief February 2005 or Policy 52 of the District Local Plan with Alterations.

28. PLANNING APPEALS

The Committee noted that four appeals had been lodged since the meeting of this Committee held on 30 May 2006.

Appellant Mr and Mrs Dench
Address 111 Willian Road, Hitchin.
Description First floor side extension
Ref. 05/01830/1HH
Procedure Written representations.

Appellant Mr and Mrs Camilleri
Address 67 Hampden Road, Hitchin.
Description Single storey side extension and alterations to existing garage and appeal against Enforcement Notice.
Ref. O5/01297/1HH
Procedure Written representations.

Appellant Michael Shanley Homes
Address Land at 15, 17 and 19 Old Hale Way, Hitchin.
Description 5 pairs of 4 bedroom semi – detached dwellings, access road following demolition of 17 and 19 Old Hale Way.
Ref. 06/00417/1
Procedure Written representations.

Appellant Michael Shanley Homes
Address 17 Old Hale Way and part of rear gardens of 15 and 19 Old Hale Way, Hitching.
Description 3 pairs of 4 bedroom semi-detached dwellings and a detached 5 bedroom dwelling following demolition of 17 Old Hale Way.
Ref. O6/00441/1
Procedure Written representations.

29. NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP – JOINT MEMBER PANEL DISCRETIONARY BUDGET 2006 – 2007 and 2007 - 2008

The Chairman referred the Committee to Minute 57 (4) for the meeting of the NHHP – JMP held on 24 April 2006. Councillor David Billing advised that he had attended the meetings of the NHHPP-JMP on 24 April and 26 June 2006 and confirmed that the schemes and projects identified by the Hitchin Committee at its meeting held on 7 March (Minute 134 refers) had been reviewed by the North Herts District Manager and a copy of the report to the JMP on 26 June 2006 was distributed to Members prior to this meeting.

The Committee noted the comments made by Councillor Billing concerning the emphasis on using the protocol as described at Minute 13 (5), (6) and (7) for the meeting of the JMP held on 26 June 2006. The Chairman requested all present to pass details and description of projects and schemes to the Hitchin Committee Administrator as soon as possible.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Members be requested to forward schemes and projects to the Hitchin Committee Administrator as soon as possible;
- (2) That the Hitchin Committee Administrator be requested to forward schemes and projects to the NHDC Chief Engineer and the North Herts District Manager of Hertfordshire Highways for initial cost estimates to be prepared and presented to the Hitchin Committee at its meeting to be held on 15 August 2006.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To allow the Hitchin Committee make recommendations for schemes and projects to be financed from the Joint Member Panel Discretionary Budget in 2006-2007 and 2007-2008.

30. CHAMPION NEWS

The Community Development Officer (CDO) provided brief details of the following activities: Summer Play Schemes; Triangle Festival; Hitchin Visioning; Sports Pavilions; Windmill Hill; Cemetery Gates; and an update on Hitchin Festival and Rhythms of the World.

With reference to the allocation of funds from Hitchin Visioning Money to specific projects the Committee reviewed the order of priority for four projects as presented at paragraph 3.3. The Committee noted that the cost estimates for works at Bancroft Gardens (Item (c) did not include any internal works inside the hall itself.

With reference to the allocation of funds to sports pavilions in Hitchin the Committee noted that the sum of £5,000 could not be taken from capital as there was a minimum amount of £15,000 for capital projects. The CDO advised the Committee that there might be some funds unspent or unallocated in the overall revenue Development budget which could be vired.

Following a short debate the Committee agreed that the priority list presented at paragraph 3.3 should be re-ordered and that these projects should be funded from the Hitchin Visioning Capital allocation.

- (1) That the information provided by the Community Development Officer on activities since the last meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 30 May 2006 be noted;
- (2) That the priority order for funding from the Area Visioning capital allocation in the first instance be as follows:
 - i Enhancement of youth facilities at Bancroft Gardens to include refurbishment of the Bancroft Hall to make it fit for purpose for a Childrens' Centre;
 - ii Works at Windmill Hill to provide an access ramp and enhancement of retaining wall at Queen Street access points;
- (3) That the following projects to be funded from the Area Visioning capital allocation be held for 'no action' pending the completion of (2) i and ii above:
 - i Rising bollards to be installed at the junction of the High Street, Brand Street and Bancroft;
 - ii Remedial works to the fountain adjacent to St. Mary's Church.
- (4) That officers be requested to prepare detailed costings and an Implementation Plan for each of the projects listed at (2) i and ii above and report back to the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 15 August 2006;
- (5) That officers be requested to consider opportunities for additional and/or external funding for each of the projects listed at (2) i and ii. (3) i and ii above.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To ensure that the Hitchin Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community Development Officer and confirm implementation of schemes or projects within the Hitchin Visioning Programme.

30. ANNUAL GRANTS, DEVELOPMENT, DISCRETIONARY AND VISIONING BUDGET 2006/2007

The Committee considered the current expenditure and balance of the Annual Grants, Development, Discretionary and Visioning budget for 2006 – 2007.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the expenditure, allocations, and balance of the current 2005-06 Development budget, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted;

- (2) That in principle a sum of £5,000 be made to the Hitchin Sunday Football League subject to the availability of funds from the Hitchin Area Development budget and allocated at £1,000 per sports pavilion as a contribution towards the material costs associated with cleaning and maintaining the internal structure of sports pavilions in Hitchin;
- (3) That officers be requested to examine in detail the Hitchin Area Development budget in order to ascertain the amount of unspent funds or a possible virement of funds to support the ongoing use of Sports Pavilions in Hitchin;
- (4) That the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services be requested to meet as soon as possible to approve the virement of budget lines in advance of the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 15 August 2006.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To advise the Hitchin Committee of funds remaining for disbursement in the year 2006/2007.

31. HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER – UPDATE

The Committee considered the oral report of the Hitchin Town Centre Manager regarding recent and forthcoming events and in particular the commencement of the Hitchin Festival. The Hitchin Town Centre Manager advised the Committee that he would discuss with the Community Development Officer additional sources of funding for the proposed works at Windmill Hill.

The Committee noted that with the resignation of the Senior Strategy Officer there was a vacancy to be filled by NHDC to the Hitchin Initiative Steering Group.

RESOLVED: That the information provided be noted.

The meeting closed at 10.32 p.m.

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Chairman