

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

Meeting held at Christ Church Hall, Bedford Road, Hitchin,
on 15 August 2006 at 7.30p.m.

MINUTES

PRESENT: *Councillors: Judi Billing (Chairman), Derek Sheard (Vice-Chairman), Alison Ashley, David Billing, Paul Clark, Joan Kirby, Bernard Lovewell, Lawrence Oliver, R. Shakespeare- Smith and Sarah Wren.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Graham Haerle- Principal Planning Officer, Victoria Woodbridge – Planning Officer, Margaret Bracey-Community Development Officer, Nigel Schofield – Committee Administrator.*

Acting Inspector S. Mann – Hertfordshire Constabulary

*Note :Councillor Judi Billing left the meeting at 8.50 p.m.
Councillor Derek Sheard took the Chair at 8.51p.m.*

32. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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

The Chairman welcomed the lead petitioner concerning traffic, parking and planning issues in Ickleford Road, Hitchin.

Additional Item – Agenda Item 9 – Planning Appeals

The Chairman announced that the Principal Planning Officer would be presenting an additional report at Agenda Item 9 concerning an appeal lodged by the applicant for the Brookers Site, Hitchin.

Reason for Urgency:

For the Committee to consider as soon as possible its position upon matters arising from an appeal lodged in respect of the Brookers Yard site, Hitchin, having regard to the Appeals time-table now imposed on the Council.

Agenda Item 6 – Review of the Consideration of the Implementation of 'Alcohol Free Zones' in Hitchin

The Chairman announced that this item would be withdrawn from the agenda as the Hitchin Committee had previously agreed to defer a decision on any 'alcohol free zone' in Hitchin until after the establishment of such a zone in Royston.

Public Conveniences in Hitchin

The Chairman confirmed that she had attended the meeting of Cabinet on 25 July 2006 (Minute refers) following the meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 4 July 2006 (Minute refers). Cabinet had noted the resolutions made by the Hitchin Committee and the Chairman had stressed the concerns raised by Hitchin Members. The Committee agreed that they supported the Chairman now and in the future to achieve the retention and refurbishment of public conveniences in Hitchin.

Controlled Parking Zone Survey – The Triangle Area, Hitchin

The Chairman announced that following the meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 18 April 2006 (Minute 145 (7) refers) confirmation had been received that the funding of the next CPZ survey in the Triangle Area would be met from funds held by the Engineering Department at NHDC.

Hitchin Community Surgery – 5 August 2006

The Chairman was very pleased to announce that the Community Surgery held on 5

August at the Market Place venue had been very successful and weather permitting the surgery to be held on 2 September 2006 would also be at the Market Place. Should the weather be inclement the Surgery would revert to Church House.

33. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillors; Deepak Sangha, R.A.C. Thake and Martin Stears.

34. MINUTES – 4 July 2006

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2006 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

35. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Agenda Item 8 – Planning Applications

Ref. - Land at 21 Verulum Road, Hitchin SG5 1QE

Councillor B. Lovewell declared a personal interest as he was involved with Hitchin Scouts as was the person registered to speak against the application. Councillor Lovewell advised the Chairman that he would remain for this item and reserved the right to speak and vote.

Councillor P. Clark declared a personal interest as he was involved with Hitchin Scouts as was the person registered to speak against the application. Councillor Clark advised the Chairman that he would remain for this item and reserved the right to speak and vote.

Agenda Item 11 – Hitchin Visioning Capital Projects

Enhancement of facilities at Bancroft Gardens.

Councillors P. Clark, B. Lovewell and S. 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.

36. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – PRESENTATION OF A PETITION

The Chairman took formal receipt of the petition and the lead petitioner thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee.

The lead petitioner advised the Committee that in the last four years there had been a large increase in the traffic using Ickleford Road and the residents had become very concerned with parking issues in this residential road. The lead petitioner gave examples of the problems: 1. Volume of traffic – noise and pollution; 2. Traffic congestion, lines of vision obscured for residents leaving or entering Ickleford Road; 3. Excessive speed of vehicles; 4. Increase in the number of lorries in excess of 7.5 tons that are not loading or loading in Ickleford Road, damage to road surface and houses; 5. Lack of spaces for residents to park their own vehicles close to their home. The lead petitioner on behalf of the residents believed that the above problems had been the result of: the opening of Sainsburys, new residential flats in Bancroft Road/Ickleford Road, affordable housing and traffic diversions had made Ickleford Road a 'rat run' and made worse by the recent closure of Starlings Bridge and a recent religious festival.

The lead petitioner stated that approximately 4000 motor vehicles use Ickleford Road each day and that the above issues caused great distress for Ickleford Road residents.

In addition to the traffic issues the lead petitioner advised the Committee that many residents were of the opinion that it would be appropriate to request an embargo on the granting of residential planning applications within a half mile radius of Ickleford Road, as this would stop an escalation of residents seeking parking places away from their own road or street.

The Chairman thanked the lead petitioner for the presentation and sought the Committee's views.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the receipt of the petition from the residents of Ickleford Road, Hitchin be noted;
- (2) That the contents of the petition (68 signatures) in respect of six items concerning traffic management issues, one item concerning residential parking in Ickleford Road and one item concerning planning control be noted;
- (3) That the Hitchin Community Development Officer be requested to meet with the lead petitioner and enter into discussions on the possible establishment of a Residents Association for Ickleford Road, Hitchin.
- (4) That the Hitchin Community Development Officer be requested to meet with the Residents Association and formulate proposals and ideas for example traffic management, traffic calming and a controlled parking zone and establish by consensus an agreed approach to such measures.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To facilitate the establishment of a Residents' Association for Ickleford Road, which would co-ordinate proposals for traffic management and parking controls.

37. REVIEW OF THE CONSIDERATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF 'ALCOHOL FREE' ZONES IN HITCHIN

RESOLVED: That this item be withdrawn from the agenda as it had been previously agreed that the Hitchin Committee would wait until an alcohol free zone had been established in Royston.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To ensure that the establishment of an 'alcohol free zone' in Royston would be carefully assessed before any such zone could be considered in Hitchin.

Although this item was withdrawn the Chairman agreed to a short discussion. Councillor Sarah Wren thanked the Chairman and advised Members that she had received representations about large amounts of litter left on Windmill Hill, under age drinking and the large numbers of young people congregating on Windmill Hill. Acting Inspector S. Mann advised the Committee that recent attendance by police at Windmill Hill had been very successful and under age drinkers had been interviewed and parents advised. Acting Inspector Mann stressed that an 'alcohol free zone' was not really appropriate as restrictions on Windmill Hill would move young people to other areas of Hitchin, such as Bancroft Gardens. Acting Inspector Mann assured the Committee that he and his officers had a good assessment of the 'users' of Windmill Hill and had sufficient powers to deal with most situations.

38. NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP – JOINT MEMBER PANEL DISCRETIONARY BUDGET – 2006-2007 AND 2007-2008

The Vice - Chairman referred the Committee to the report provided by the NHDC Chief Engineer and the North Herts District Manager (Hertfordshire Highways) and in particular Paragraph 4 concerning schemes and cost estimates. The Vice - Chairman also referred the Committee to Appendices A and B for details of resolutions made at recent meetings of the JMP and Hitchin Committee.

The Committee reviewed the comments from both highways and NHDC engineering relating to the schemes listed in Paragraph 4.1. The Committee were disappointed that only one cost estimate had been provided (Item 8) and following discussion it was agreed that a request should be made for a revisit to these schemes as listed, (Minute 38 (3) below):

With reference to Minute 13 (4) of the JMP meeting held on 26 June the Vice-Chairman proposed and the Committee agreed that any decision on funding towards the costs of repair and maintenance to verges subject to repeat damage be delayed until the allocation of funds to projects and schemes had been confirmed.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information on the cost estimate and comments for the projects and schemes put forward by the Hitchin Committee after its meeting held on 4 July 2006 be noted;
- (2) That the Hitchin Committee were disappointed to receive only one cost estimate for a scheme proposed by Members;
- (3) That the following schemes and projects should be reviewed again by the NHDC Chief Engineer and the North Herts District Manager (Hertfordshire Highways) and cost estimates provided for each – including engineering and highway comments as appropriate;

1. Install a pedestrian phase at Walsworth Crossroad Traffic Lights

Please provide a cost estimate for a total pedestrian phase on all four crossing points, with a request for the Willian Road/North Herts College arm to receive priority.

Note. That the introduction of a pedestrian phase should take note of the effect on traffic flows on the A505, which are currently a problem at peak hours;

2. Change junction at Willian Road – Purwell Lane

Please provide a cost estimate for a change of priority at this junction with a minimal effect on the current junction geometry;

3. Resurface Westmill Road

A cost estimate is required for the length of Westmill Road between John Barker Place and The Crescent.

4. Resurface John Barker Place

A cost estimate is required for the total length of John Barker Place;

5. Vehicle Activated Sign at the BP garage on the Hitchin to Stevenage side of the A602

A cost estimate is required for the installation of a vehicle activated sign in order for Highbury Ward Members to consider joint funding (as per the VAS in Wymondley Road, Hitchin);

7. The Maples and Stevenage Road Junction – extension of double yellow lines

A cost estimate is required for the completion of this scheme to allow the Highbury Ward Members consider joint funding;

And the two following schemes not previously costed or commented upon:

9. Vehicle Activated Sign adjacent to Our Lady's Primary School, Old Hale Way

A cost estimate is required for the installation of a vehicle activated sign in order for Oughton Ward Members to consider joint funding;

10. Vehicle Activated Sign in St. Michael's Road

A cost estimate is required for the installation of a vehicle activated sign placed on a downhill section of St. Michaels Road before the junction with Browning Drive (northerly direction) to allow Walsworth Ward Members the opportunity to consider joint funding;

- (4) That the NHDC Chief Engineer and the North Herts District Manager (Hertfordshire Highways) be requested to provide the Hitchin Committee at its meeting to be held on 28 September 2006 with cost estimates and any additional engineering comments for the schemes listed at (3) above that could receive matched funding from the Hitchin Discretionary Budget for 2006-2007.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To allow additional funding to be made from the Hitchin Discretionary Budget for the implementation of traffic management and road safety schemes in the Hitchin area.

39. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee heard oral presentations as follows;

Application Ref. 06/00910/1 – Land at 21 Verulam Road, Hitchin SG5 1QE

Elizabeth Cranfield spoke as an objector.

Mr P. Limburn spoke as the applicant.

Application Ref. 06/00661/1HH – Land at 43 Millard Way, Hitchin SG4 0QF

Mr T. Boon spoke as an objector.

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:

SCHEDULE

Reference Number	Description of Development and Location	Decision
06/00964/1HH	Land at 7 Whitehurst Avenue, Hitchin SG 5 1SR Two storey side extension.	Conditional Permission (as report)
06/00910/1	Land at 21 Verulam Road, Hitchin SG5 1QE Two storey side extension to facilitate conversion from 2 to 3 self-contained two bed roomed flats.	Deferred (see (a) below)
06/01064/1HH	Land at 14 Manton Road, Hitchin SG4 9NW Single storey side extension.	Conditional Permission (as report)
06/00661/1HH	Land at 43 Millard Way, Hitchin SG4 0QF Part single, part two-storey side extension. Single storey front extension.	Deferred (see (b) below)

- (a) That with regard to planning application reference 06/ 00910/1 that a decision be **DEFERRED** to allow the Hitchin Committee undertake a site visit accompanied by a Planning Officer in order to investigate the potential loss of light and privacy to the adjacent property, 20 Verulum Road.
- (b) That with regard to planning application reference 06/ 00661/1HH that a decision be **DEFERRED** to allow negotiations to take place with the applicant with a view to achieving a reduction in the depth of the first floor extension from 6.7m to 5.7m.

40. PLANNING APPEALS – BROOKERS YARD, HITCHIN.

The Principal Planning Officer advised the Committee that the applicant had lodged an appeal against the decision made by the Hitchin Committee at its meeting held on 4 July 2006 (Minute 27 refers).

The Principal Planning Officer submitted his report to the Committee and amplified the reasons why the second reason for refusing the original application could not be easily defended at an appeal hearing. Following a short discussion the Committee voted unanimously without abstention to concur with the officer's recommendation.

RESOLVED: The Hitchin Committee agreed that the second reason for the refusal of permission as set out in Decision Notice Ref. 05/00741/1 should not be pursued insofar as the appeal now lodged against that decision was concerned.

For clarification the second reason for refusal is reproduced below:

- (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.

41. **PLANNING APPEALS – UPDATE**

The Committee noted that one appeal had been lodged since the meeting of this Committee held on 4 July 2006.

Appellant	Stephen Howard Homes
Address	Land at Brookers Yard, Suzuki and Peter Fish premises, off Paynes Park, Hitchin.
Description	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). Ref. 05/00741/1
Procedure	Request by appellant for a public inquiry (to be confirmed)

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that one appeal had been determined since the meeting of this Committee held on 4 July 2006.

Appellant	Weston Homes plc
Address	Land off Walsworth Road, adjacent to B&Q store and to rear of 59-69 Dacre Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 9ST
Description:	34 one bedroom flats, 59 two bedroom flats, 9 two bedroom houses and 3 three bedroom houses. Ref. 06/00145/1
Decision:	This appeal was DISMISSED on 31 July 2006
Procedure:	Public Inquiry.

42. **CHAMPION NEWS**

The Community Development Officer (CDO) provided an update on projects, activities and scheme details since the last meeting held on 4 July 2006. The CDO confirmed that a youth worker had been recruited for the Westmill/Groundwork Youth Project, residents' associations will be constituted for Hardy Close and West Hill, a draft management plan is due soon for Butts Close, clean-up days have taken place at Walsworth Common, the promotion of Hitchin Market is proceeding in local and regional media. The Committee noted that Hitchin Shopmobility would not require funding until 2007-2008.

The CDO was pleased to advise the Committee that equipment for the wheeled sports facilities at Walsworth Common and King George V playing fields had arrived on site. The CDO confirmed that there had been more compliments than complaints at the 2006 Rhythms of the World festival and that a debrief report would be presented to the Hitchin Committee this Autumn.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided by the Community Development Officer on activities since the last meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 4 July 2006 be noted;

- (2) That the Community Development Officer be requested to report back to the Committee via Champion News the outcomes of issues raised at Town Talk meetings.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To ensure that the Hitchin Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community Development Officer.

43. HITCHIN VISIONING CAPITAL PROJECTS

The Community Development Officer (CDO) reminded the Committee that four projects had been ranked at the meeting held on 4 July 2006 (Minute 30 refers) and Members noted the costs for the works at Bancroft Gardens and Bancroft Hall and the works at Windmill Hill. The Committee noted that Hitchin Rotary Club had agreed to consider a replacement fountain at St. Marys Church as Rotary had installed the current fountain. The CDO advised the Committee that the cost for the installation of rising bollards at the junction of High Street and Brand Street was under investigation.

Following a short debate the Committee agreed to allocate finds from the Hitchin Visioning Budget as follows:

RESOLVED: That the following projects be financed from the Hitchin Area Visioning Capital Budget for 2006-2007:

(a) **Bancroft Gardens**

That the sum of **£67,500.00** be allocated from the Visioning Capital Budget for the enhancement of youth facilities at Bancroft Gardens to include refurbishment of the Bancroft Hall to make it fit for purpose for a Childrens' Centre;

(b) **Windmill Hill**

That the sum of **£42,850.00** be allocated from the Visioning Capital budget for works at Windmill Hill to provide an access ramp and enhancement of the existing retaining wall at bottom of Windmill Hill (Queen Street). That the CDO , in partnership with the Hitchin Town Centre Manager, investigate the option of external funding for an access ramp and construction of a new wall. And should this initiative be unsuccessful to proceed with the repair option.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To allow the Hitchin Committee contribute to meeting the Council's Strategic objectives and implementation of the Area Visioning action plans.

44. 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 the Hitchin Community Development Officer be requested to advise Ward Members of any brought forward allocated funds that could be vired to the projects identified at Minute 38 (3) above and for the maintenance and cleansing of Sports Pavilions in Hitchin.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

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

45. HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER – UPDATE

The Hitchin Town Centre Manager advised that he had no specific items to report but in response to a question about Churchgate he confirmed that Hammersmatch had still to submit a planning application for Churchgate. The Town Centre Manager advised the Committee that the business community in Hitchin were anxious to have the Churchgate re-development proceed as soon as possible. Concern had been expressed by the Chamber of Commerce about planned development at Letchworth Garden City and Stevenage with little evidence of comparative improvements at Hitchin. The Town Centre Manager also cited the lack of progress with turning the Hitchin Town Hall into a Community Engagement Centre as a cause for concern where the local authority had been unable to provide financial support in 2006-2007.

RESOLVED: That the information provided be noted.

The meeting closed at 9.35 p.m.

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Chairman