

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

**Meeting held at Benslow Music Trust, Hitchin,
on 28 September 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, Deepak Sangha, R. Shakespeare- Smith Martin Stears and Sarah Wren.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Andy Godman –Head of Housing and Environmental Health, Graham Haerle- Principal Planning Officer, Margaret Bracey - Community Development Officer, Nigel Schofield – Committee Administrator.*

*Note: Councillor R.A.C. Thake arrived at 7.38 p.m.
Councillor Joan Kirby arrived at 8.08 p.m.*

47. 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 representative from Hitchin Allotments Association.

The Chairman was pleased to announce that the second 'open air' Hitchin Community Surgery held on 2 September 2006 at Market Place had been very successful. The next surgery on 7 October 2006 would also be at Market Place with the proviso of using Church House should there be inclement weather.

Agenda Item 6 - NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP – JOINT MEMBER PANEL DISCRETIONARY BUDGET – 2006-2007 AND 2007-2008

The Chairman advised the Committee that the information requested at the meeting held on 15 August 2006 had not been received. The Chairman advised that she would read out a statement from the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services at Agenda Item 6.

48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

49. MINUTES – 15 August 2006

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 August 2006 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

50. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Agenda Item 8 – Planning Applications

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

Councillor P. Clark declared a personal interest as he was recently 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 10 – Champion News – Walsworth Festival 2007

Councillors B. Lovewell and R. Shakespeare - Smith declared a personal interest as they were Chairman and Secretary respectively for the 2007 Walsworth Festival and confirmed that they would remain for this item.

51. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – HITCHIN ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

The representative thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee.

The representative provided an update on improvements to the Old Hale Way allotments and in particular thanked the authority via Hitchin Committee for the improvement to the parking area and alleviation of flooding. The representative thanked all concerned for the clear up of dumped material which had dramatically improved the visual amenity of the site.

The Committee noted that the main entrance gate to the allotment site was in need of refurbishment or perhaps replacement in order to deter fly tipping and general security to the site.

The representative next reviewed the amount of subsidy provided by NHDC and in particular plot rental compared to other areas in England. Concern had been raised by the Hitchin Allotments Association as to a rise in plot rental and although there was a waiting list at this site, annual increases in rent could well set back the revival in allotment gardening and this should be avoided. With this particular concern in mind the representative proposed that another meeting should be convened with Members of the Hitchin Committee, and proposed an 'Allotments Champion' for the promotion, co-operation and development of allotments in Hitchin.

The Chairman led a short debate and it was agreed that a meeting should be held soon, put this meeting on a regular basis and all supported the proposal for an Allotments Champion.

- (1) That the representative from the Hitchin Allotments Association be thanked for the informative presentation;
- (2) That this Committee supports the proposal for an 'Allotments Champion' in Hitchin;
- (3) That the Community Development Officer be requested to make the necessary arrangements for a meeting between Members of the Hitchin Committee, officers from Parks and Countryside with representatives from Hitchin Allotments Association to discuss *inter alia* plot rentals, subsidy, site maintenance and the possibility of being a self managing association.

REASON FOR DECISION

To continue the support of Hitchin Committee for local community groups.

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

The Chairman advised the Committee that the information requested at the meeting held on 15 August 2006 had not been received. By way of clarification the Chairman read out a statement provided by the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services.

'Following the retirement of the Chief Engineer the allocation of his duties has finally been agreed. The Committee Clerk will be advised who the NHDC liaison officer with the Herts Highways partnership would be and arrange for the cost estimates to be obtained and presented to the Hitchin Committee at the meeting to be held on 31 October'.

Several Members expressed their extreme disappointment at the lack of information and considered that Cabinet should be made aware of this Committee's concerns as to the apparent lack of management control concerning the hand over of duties previously undertaken by the Chief Engineer.

The Committee were most concerned with the delays in the provision of cost estimates for schemes put forward at the meeting held on 15 August 2006 (Minute 38 refers) and the delay that this would cause to the improvements in traffic management and road safety in Hitchin. Following this short debate the Chairman sought the Committee's views and it was agreed that the Portfolio Holder for Planning

and Transport be requested to convene a meeting as a matter of urgency between Members and officers to resolve this problem and if at all possible before the next meeting of the NHHP – JMP on 16 October. And failing this before the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee on 31 October so that the Hitchin Committee could review the cost estimates and decide the amount of matched funding that could be made by Committee.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

- (1) That Cabinet be advised of the disappointment of the Hitchin Committee at the lack of information concerning cost estimates for traffic management and road safety schemes as requested at the meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 15 August 2006 (Minute 38 refers);
- (2) That Cabinet be advised of the Hitchin Committee's extreme concern at the weakness of management control concerning the handover arrangements for the re-allocation of duties previously undertaken by the Chief Engineer with the resulting non provision of cost estimates for highway management and highway safety at the meeting held on 28 September as per (1) above;
- (3) That the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport be requested as matter of urgency to convene a meeting with : The Head of Planning and Building Control, The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Hitchin Committee, the Chairman of the NHHP – Joint Member Panel and the NHDC liaison officer with North Herts Highways Partnership;
- (4) That at the meeting detailed at (3) above arrangements are agreed as to the gathering of such cost estimates detailed in the Minutes (38) of the Hitchin Committee held on 15 August 2006 and presented to the Hitchin Committee on a date to allow presentation to the NHHP – JMP at its meeting on 16 October, or at or before the next meeting to be held on 31 October 2006.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To allow additional funding to be made from the Hitchin Development Ward Budgets for schemes and projects to be progressed in the Hitchin Area as soon as possible.

53. THE USE OF A BYELAW TO CONTROL VERGE PARKING IN HITCHIN

The Head of Housing and Environmental Health (HHEH) advised Members that Enforcement was one of his responsibilities and reminded Members that at the Town Talk held on 7 March 2006 a member of the public had requested action on verge parking and associated road safety issues in Hitchin.

The report included an update on the legal position as explained by the Licensing and Enforcement Manager at the Town Talk held on 7 March 2006. The HHEH advised Members that there was currently no legislation that specifically prohibited the parking of cars and light vans on footways or grass verges in Hitchin. The Committee noted that only Hertfordshire Constabulary could enforce 'no parking' by heavy commercial vehicles on verges and footways.

The HHEH confirmed that Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) had adopted a byelaw (under the Local Government Act 1972) to control verge parking in Letchworth Garden City only. The Committee noted that this authority could take direct prosecution if it wanted to do so in Letchworth Garden City but in fact neither HCC or NHDC had undertaken any such prosecutions in recent years with the knowledge that Traffic Regulation Orders were the primary legislative instrument to deal with parking problems.

The HHEH confirmed that an officer working group was currently reviewing the nature and incidence of the off road verge and footway parking problem across the District with the objective of identifying appropriate parking control measures.

The Committee thanked the officer for the report and whilst noting the unlikely introduction of a byelaw wished to be advised of what action could be done immediately. The HHEH advised that a physical deterrent such as bollards at the edge of grass verges was the most immediate measure that could be used. This could be followed by the introduction of specific Traffic Regulation Orders on known 'hot spots'. The HHEH commented that the officer working group was in the process of making recommendations following ground surveys.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided and the officer advice that a new byelaw to prohibit verge parking was not a feasible option be noted;
- (2) That the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services and the officer working group 'verge parking' be requested to present a report to the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 31 October 2006;
- (3) That the report identified at (2) above should include *inter alia* a summary of the officer working group findings to date, specific details of verge parking 'hot spots' in Hitchin and the legislation (if appropriate), Traffic Regulation Order or physical barrier which could be used to address such problems.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To progress the need for the introduction of physical barriers on grass verges in Hitchin and the potential of additional Traffic Regulation Orders to prevent parking on grass verges and footways.

54. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee heard oral presentations as follows:

Application Ref. 06/00910/1 – Land at 21 Verulum Road, Hitchin.

E. Cranfield spoke as an objector.

Application Ref. 06/01350/1 – Former Tyre and Exhaust Centre, 18-20 Stevenage Road, Hitchin.

A. Stocker spoke as the applicant/agent.

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
06/00661/1HH	Land at 43 Millard Way, Hitchin, SG4 0QF Part single, part two storey side extension. Single storey front extension (as amended by plan received 11.09.06).	Conditional Permission (see (a) below)
06/00910/1	Land at 21 Verulum Road, Hitchin, SG5 1QE Two storey rear extension to facilitate conversion from 2 to 3 self-contained two-bedroomed flats.	Conditional Permission (see (b) below)
06/01410/1HH	Land at 44 Brampton Park Road, Hitchin, SG5 1XF Provision of car port on side elevation and timber shed in rear garden following removal of existing buildings.	Conditional Permission (as report)

06/01350/1

Former Tyre and Exhaust Centre, 18-20 Stevenage Road, Hitchin, SG4 9DL

Three storey building to provide 9 two bedroom and 2 one bedroom flats with archway vehicular access, 16 car parking spaces and amenity area, following demolition of existing buildings. (amended by plans received 24.08.06).

Conditional Permission
(see (c) below)

- (a) That with regard to planning application reference 06/ 00661/1HH planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the conditions in the report and the revised Condition 4 as follows:

- (4) Within 1 month of the demolition of the existing garage as hereby permitted a 1.8m high fence shall be erected along the boundary between the application site and No. 45 Millard Way in place of the garage. This fence shall not extend beyond the main front elevation of the application property.

Reason To safeguard the residential amenities of No. 45.

- (b) That with regard to planning application reference 06/00910/1 planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the conditions in the report and the revised Conditions 3 and 4 as follows:

- (3) Details and/or samples of materials to be used on all external elevations and the roof of the development hereby permitted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before the development is commenced.

Reason To ensure that the development will have an acceptable appearance which does not detract from the appearance and character of the surrounding area.

- (4) The proposed new windows on the side elevation of the extension hereby permitted together with the new basement and ground floor windows within the existing building facing towards No. 20 Verulam Road as shown as Drawing no. LIN/06/02C shall be glazed with obscure glass and permanently maintained as such unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason In the interests of privacy and amenity.

- (c) That with regard to planning application reference 06/01350/1 the Committee **RESOLVED** that, subject to amended plans being submitted to reduce the ground floor depth of the right hand part of the development thereby enabling a one metre tree planting strip to be provided between parking spaces 4-10 and the rear boundary, planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the conditions as set out in the report of the Head of Planning and Building Control with the substitution of Condition 11 by the following condition:

- (11) No gates shall be provided across the entrance to the site or within archway across the development.

Reason In the interests of highway safety so that vehicles do not wait on the public highway and in order that the development is seen to satisfactorily integrate into the local community.

55. PLANNING APPEALS - UPDATE

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that no appeals had been lodged since the meeting of this Committee held on 15 August 2006.

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that four appeals had been determined since the meeting of this Committee held on 15 August 2006.

Appellant Mr and Mrs W. Dench
Address 111 Willian Road, Hitchin SG4 0LT
Description: First floor extension over garage.
Ref. 05/1830/1HH
Decision: This appeal was DISMISSED on 8 August 2006.

Appellant Mr F. Delbasso
Address 106 Bedford Road, Hitchin
Description: Detached garage.
Ref. 06/00129/1HH
Decision: This appeal was DISMISSED on 29 August 2006.

Appellant Michael Shanley Homes
Address Land at 15, 17 and 19 Old Hale Way, Hitchin.
Description: Residential development comprising five pairs of 4 bedroomed semi-detached dwellings, 2 double garages, 1 double car port and 14 parking spaces, access road and landscaping following demolition of 17 and 19 Old Hale Way (as amended by drawing no. 936-PN-201 Rev. A received 20.4.2006).
Ref. 06/00417/1
Decision: This appeal was DISMISSED on 25 September 2006.
Procedure: Delegated refusal – Local Plan Policies 1 and 57

Appellant Michael Shanley Homes
Address Land at 15, 17 and 19 Old Hale Way, Hitchin.
Description: Residential development comprising three pairs of 4 bedroomed semi-detached dwellings and a detached five bedroomed dwelling, double garage, and associated parking following demolition of 17 Old Hale Way (as amended by drawing no. 936-PN-301 Rev. A received 20.4.2006).
Ref. 06/00441/1
Decision: This appeal was DISMISSED on 25 September 2006.
Procedure: Delegated refusal – Local Plan Policies 1 and 57

56. CHAMPION NEWS

The Community Development Officer (CDO) for Hitchin provided details on the following: Ickleford Road Residents Association, the first meeting had been held on 26 September 2006 which had been very successful with residents reaching a consensus on the preferred traffic management. The CDO proposed and it was agreed that the wishes of the Residents' Association be included in the Champion News for the meeting on 31 October 2006; Triangle Festival 2007, planned for Saturday 30 June 2006 with the first planning meeting held on 27 September 2006; CCTV Spotlight – Windmill Hill, this facility cannot be installed in close proximity to a CCTV camera; Summer Zone activities, the activities had been very successful in 2006 with cricket one of the most popular events; Hitchin and Strathmore fun clubs, booster seats had been funded by Members from their own discretionary budgets; Burford Way, to mediate community safety issues associated with street play goal post sets had been placed on Burford Way Open space; Wheeled sports facilities, the official opening at King George V Recreation Ground and Walsworth Common will be on 24 October 2006; Walsworth Festival, the next festival will be on 20 May 2007; Democracy Week, this will occur in the week beginning Monday 16 October 2006 with a Question Time event at NHDC on 19 October 2006.

The CDO provided a brief update on issues raised at previous Town Talks and subsequently completed viz. Recycling of batteries, A new bench at St. Marys Square, weeding in St. Marys Square, Hitchin public conveniences, Disabled Car Parking and Car Parking facilities. Investigations are ongoing for repairs to the road at rear of Woodcote House.

RESOLVED: That the information provided by the Community Development Officer on activities since the last meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 15 August 2006 be noted;

REASON FOR DECISION:

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

57. 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: That the expenditure, allocations, and balance of the current 2006-07 Development budget, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted;

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

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

58. HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER – UPDATE

The Chairman tendered the apologies of the Hitchin Town Centre Manager as he was away at a regional meeting of Town Centre Managers in Worcestershire.

The meeting closed at 9.35 p.m.

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Chairman