

12 January 2007

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To: The Members of the Hitchin Committee of North Hertfordshire District Council:

Councillors: Judi Billing (Chairman), Derek Sheard (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A.G. Ashley, David Billing, Paul Clark, Joan Kirby, Bernard Lovewell, Lawrence Oliver, D Sangha, Derek Sheard, R. Shakespeare – Smith, Martin Stears, R.A.C. Thake and Sarah-Jane Wren.

You are invited to attend a meeting of the

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

to be held at

**BENSLOW MUSIC TRUST
BENSLOW LANE, HITCHIN**

on

TUESDAY, 23 JANUARY 2007

at

7.30 p.m.

Yours sincerely,



David Miley
Democratic Services Manager

AGENDA - PART I

ITEM	PAGE
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	-
2. MINUTES To take as read and approve as a true record the Minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 12 December 2006.	-
3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS Members should notify the Chairman of other business which they wish to be discussed by the Committee at the end of the business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency. The Chairman will decide whether the item(s) raised will be considered.	-
4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive from Members of the Committee any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda. Members should either declare a prejudicial or personal interest and are required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared. Members declaring a prejudicial interest should leave the room and not seek to influence the decision on that particular item of business.	-
5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION To receive petitions, comments and questions from members of the public. Public participation requests received within the agreed time will be notified to Members as soon as practicable.	
6. PLANNING APPLICATIONS	1
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL	
1. 89 Walsworth Road, Hitchin.	3
2. Land off Walsworth Road, Hitchin (formerly F.J.Warren site).	22
3. King George V Playing fields, Old Hale Way, Hitchin.	38
4. 26 Willoughby Way, Hitchin.	42
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REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL This presentation will be in an oral format.	

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<p>9. AN ARTS, MUSEUMS AND HERITAGE STRATEGY FOR NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES <i>To invite comment and suggestions on the development of an Arts, Museums and Heritage Strategy for North Hertfordshire.</i></p>	49
<p>10. AREA GOVERNANCE AND COSTS OF DEMOCRACY REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES <i>To allow the Hitchin Committee make comments and suggestions against the proposed changes to Area Governance and the ensuing Costs of Democracy.</i></p>	81
<p>11. POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES – HITCHIN WARDS REPORT OF THE RETURNING OFFICER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE <i>To allow the Hitchin Committee review the revision of polling districts and polling stations following changes to Ward boundaries in Hitchin.</i></p>	97
<p>12. DISPOSAL OF LAND AT REAR OF 79 TO 111 MILESTONE ROAD – WESTMILL, HITCHIN REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES <i>To seek the views of the Hitchin Committee on a proposal to dispose of land to North Hertfordshire Homes.</i></p>	163
<p>13. HIGHWAY VERGE ASSESSMENT – NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS – JOINT MEMBER PANEL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL AND THE HEAD OF HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH <i>To allow the Hitchin Committee make comment on the physical damage to highway verges in Hitchin and proposed remedial action.</i></p>	169
<p>14. CHAMPION NEWS REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES <i>To advise the Hitchin Committee of the schemes and activities undertaken by the Community Development officer since the last meeting held on 12 December 2006.</i></p>	181

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15.	ANNUAL GRANTS, DEVELOPMENT, DISCRETIONARY AND VISIONING BUDGETS 2006 – 2007 REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES Grant Application Hitchin Allotments Association <i>To advise the Hitchin Committee of the current expenditure and balances within the delegated budgets.</i>	185
16.	HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER This presentation will be in an oral format.	193

INFORMATION NOTE

The following item has been prepared as an Information Note to all Members of the Hitchin Committee and is presented as a supporting volume to the main agenda.

This item will not be published with this agenda. Copies will be deposited at Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock and Royston Libraries for public inspection.

ITEM

- A. HITCHIN COMMUNITY SURGERY – 2 DECEMBER 2006 AND 6 JANUARY 2007** **1**
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

The Hitchin Committee will next meet in the Civic Year 2006/2007 as follows:

2007

6 March Roman Catholic Hall, Nightingale Road, Hitchin.
17 April Benslow Music Trust, Benslow Lane, Hitchin. **TOWN TALK**

HITCHIN AREA COMMITTEE
23 January 2007

* PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM NO.

6

TITLE OF REPORT: PLANNING APPLICATIONS

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and Local Government Act 1972

In respect of each of the following reports concerning individual applications for planning permission, Listed Building Consent, the whole of the application file shall be regarded as background papers for the purposes of Section 100(d) of the 1972 Act.

AGENDA INDEX

ITEM:	REF NO:	LOCATION:DESCRIPTION	CONTACT OFFICER:	PAGE:
1.	06/02558/ 1	89 Walsworth Road, Hitchin, SG4 9SX Residential development comprising nine 3 bedroom dwellings and two 2 bedroom dwellings, new vehicular access and ancillary works, following demolition of existing buildings	Graham Haerle 01462 474209	3
2.	06/02607/ 1	Land off Walsworth Road (adjacent to B & Q Store and rear of 59-69, Dacre Road) Hitchin Residential development of 92 dwellings comprising 23 one bedroom and 58 two bedroom flats in 2 blocks of 3 & 4 storeys over a semi-basement parking area for 87 vehicles. 8 two bedroom & 3 four bedroom 2 & 3 storey terraced houses with 10 parking spaces. New vehicular & pedestrian access via Walsworth Road. Emergency and service 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)	Graham Haerle 01462 474209	22

3.	06/02116/ 1	King George V Playing Field, Old Hale Way, Hitchin, SG5 1XL Erection of 6 x 8m floodlight columns in association with the refurbishment of existing tennis courts	Joanne Cousins 01462 474418	38
4.	06/02696/ 1HH	26 Willoughby Way, Hitchin, SG4 9LW Single storey rear extension following demolition of existing conservatory	Chris Carter 01462 474477	42

ITEM NO: 1	<u>Location:</u>	89 Walsworth Road, Hitchin, SG4 9SX
	<u>Applicant:</u>	Mr M Ayres
	<u>Proposal:</u>	Residential development comprising nine 3 bedroom dwellings and two 2 bedroom dwellings, new vehicular access and ancillary works, following demolition of existing buildings
	<u>Ref.No:</u>	06/02558/ 1
	<u>Officer:</u>	Graham Haerle 01462 474209

Date of expiry of statutory period : 13 February 2007

Reason for Referral to Committee

Called in to committee by Councillor David Billing "for determination in the wider public interest, owing to the local concerns about the loss of significant Victorian buildings"

1.0 Relevant History

- 1.1 A previous application for 9 three bedroom and 2 two bedroom houses submitted by the applicants on the 8th September was withdrawn on the 11th October in the light of planning objections to certain details of the design and layout that would have resulted in the plans being recommended for refusal.

2.0 Policies

2.1 County Structure Plan Review 1991-2011:

Policy 1 - Sustainable Development
 Policy 22 - Reduction of Travel Need and Car Usage
 Policy 25/Supplementary Planning Guidance - Parking Standards

2.2 District Local Plan No 2 with Alterations:

Policy 1 - Pattern and Character of North Hertfordshire
 Policy 26 - Housing Proposals
 Policy 55 - Parking Standards plus Supplementary Planning Document: Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development
 Policy 57 - Residential Guidelines and Standards

2.3 Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Statements:

PPS 1 Delivering Sustainable Development
 PPS3 Housing
 PPG13 Transport

3.0 Representations

3.1 **County Highway Authority** - no objections subject to conditions

3.2 **Local Residents/Amenity Groups** - letters received from the occupiers of **1, 5, 9, 10, 13 and 18, Trevor Road; 5 Benslow Rise; 7 Benslow Lane; 90A, 105, Walsworth Road; 51 Radcliffe Road; 40 Old Park Road** objecting to the application on the following summarised grounds:

- 1) loss of Rose Cottage, the existing property on the site, which is the last remaining Victorian building of significance in Walsworth Road in terms of local historical connections and townscape;
- 2) modern design of the development out of keeping with existing buildings in the area;
- 3) height of the development will be overbearing in relation to Trevor Road properties; will cause loss of privacy and light to rear gardens and backs of houses in Trevor Road and Benslow Rise;
- 4) loss of amenity through general noise, vehicle manoeuvring on the site, the rear part of which has been a long established quiet garden area; loss of wildlife habitat;
- 5) inadequate car parking;
- 6) adverse impact on protected trees and potential damage to roots of trees within adjacent gardens,
- 7) add to traffic congestion in Walsworth Road; increase in traffic noise and light pollution;
- 8) pressure on resources, particularly water supply/pressure

I have copied Appendix 1 to this report letters of objection received from Hitchin Forum, The Hitchin Society and Portland Planning (consultants to the Trevor Road Residents Association)

4.0 Planning Considerations

4.1 Site & Surroundings

4.1.1 The application site is located between the recently completed Sanders Place flat development (the former Renault Garage premises) and the Walsworth Road frontage properties 90-93 (inc) which extend to the junction with Trevor Road.

4.1.2 The site has a frontage of 25m and a depth of some 100m leading behind the rear garden boundaries of 1-10 (inc) Trevor Road. The site rises by some 5m up to the rear boundary, behind which runs a public footpath separating Walsworth Road/Trevor Road properties from the rear gardens of residential properties situated at a higher level on the west side of Benslow Rise.

4.1.3 The existing Victorian detached building on the site, occupied for many years until recently by Bradshaw Johnson, chartered accountants, is set back some 20m from the road. It sits centrally within the site leaving gaps of 3m and 7 m (approx) on either side. In front of the building is an informal parking area with 4 existing trees having recently been made the subject of a confirmed Tree Preservation Order. Behind the building, within the large garden area, a Yew tree to the rear of 7 Trevor Road and a Sycamore and Ash trees abutting the rear boundary are also covered by this TPO.

4.1.4 The Sanders Place development generally has 3 floors of accommodation with the front and rear blocks having heights of 11metres and 12metres respectively. Properties on the north side of Trevor Road, backing on to the site are of a mixed style and height (2, 2 1/2 and 3 storey).

4.2 **Proposal**

4.2.1 Facing the front of the site from the road, the 4 significant trees to the right (covered by the TPO) limit the development of the frontage to the formation of an access road to highway authority standards and the construction of a single, detached house next to the side boundary with Sanders Place. Once past the protected trees and where the site widens from 23m to 37m (approx) a row of 5 terrace properties is proposed. In this position these would be set back 35m (approx) from the road, the right hand unit being 2 storey and the remainder being 3. The access road would continue as a driveway past the left-hand end of the terrace, next to Sanders Place, to serve a pair of 2 storey houses backing on to the rear gardens of 5-7 Trevor Road and a row of 3 , three storey houses at the rear of the site backing on to the rear boundary with the public footpath behind.

4.2.2 19 parking spaces would be provided. All properties would have rear gardens extending in area from 30-80 sq.metres

4.3 **Key Issues**

4.3.1 The key issues in the consideration and determination of this application concern the impact of the development as proposed upon the appearance of the road frontage, whether the layout and design are satisfactory, with particular reference to the amenities of adjoining residential occupiers, and the need to ensure that reasonable steps have been taken to safeguard protected trees. Consideration should also be given to parking arrangements and the garden areas. Finally, in view of the considerable weight of local opinion objecting to the loss of the existing Victorian building on the site, I shall advise members of the current position from the Local Planning Authority's point of view regarding this issue

4.3.2 Taking these points in turn, the introduction of the single dwelling, 7 metres wide at the front of the site, next to and aligning with the main front wall of Sanders Place, would not have a dramatic effect upon views along the road. Clearly it would result in a significant change to the appearance of the site taken in isolation, however, a building in this location would benefit the general streetscene by acting as a foil to the present rather bland appearance of the end wall to Sanders Place. To that extent I welcome a new property in this position and with an overall height of some 11metres, it would be comparable to the height of Sanders Place which sits quite satisfactorily within the general scale of properties along this part of the road. The design would adopt a fairly traditional style with a projecting bay at ground and first floor levels to reflect similar features found on nearby Victorian and Edwardian properties. This design approach has overcome an objection I had to the previous (withdrawn) application which proposed a building of modern form which I did not feel would be visually satisfactory on the site frontage.

4.3.3 Turning to the layout and design of the remainder of the scheme, the criticisms I had to the previous application in terms of layout have also been met: these concerned the proximity of one of the semi-detached houses in the centre of the site to a protected Yew tree, an unduly large area of hardsurfacing at the rear of the layout for parking and access and the location of a 3 storey unit at the right hand end of the main terrace nearest to the rear boundaries of 2 and 3 Trevor Road. These 3 items have been satisfactorily addressed by revising the footprint of the semi-detached house thereby achieving a reasonable gap with the protected tree,

reducing the area of hardsurfacing by relocating a parking space and introducing more landscaping and substituting a two storey unit with monopitch roof for the 3 storey end of terrace house to the rear of 2 and 3 Trevor Road.

- 4.3.4 With regard to the overall design of the development, the contemporary approach adopted by the applicant's architects for the 2 terraced blocks has been strongly criticised by many of those who have written to the Council expressing their views upon the application. This design approach has been promoted by the applicants as a positive step to provide a different style of architecture in what they describe as a contained location. Initially I was apprehensive about this approach, however, the fact remains that the site is not within a Conservation Area, it does not affect the setting of any listed buildings and there have been examples of more innovative designs allowed and built in the general area which I consider to be quite successful e.g. the Audi car showroom in Nightingale Road and the Benslow Music School extension next to Benslow Lane. Whilst I was not happy to support an isolated frontage building adopting a contemporary design - hence the revision embodied in this second application - I accept the architect's reference to the remainder of the site being (visually) contained from public view. I consider the buildings in question to be of good design and rather than adopt the "safe" approach of a pastiche style to reflect nearby buildings I am satisfied that, although different, there is no reasonable planning objection to raise to the contemporary design as proposed on this particular site and in this particular location. As part of the architects design is the use of brick, render and boarding for the walls and profiled metal for the roofs. The frontage building would use facing brickwork and slate roof tiles.
- 4.3.5 With the revisions made to nearest end terraced property to 2 and 3 Trevor Road, there is no reasonable basis having regard to the Council's Local Plan policy guidelines to raise objection to the layout in terms of its relationship to adjoining properties. At present there is an end gable wall (corrugated iron and boarding) of a substantial single storey building abutting the boundary of the short rear garden to no. 2 Trevor Road. This would be removed with the new end wall of the 2 storey terraced unit being located 5m away from the boundary. There would be no windows in the end walls of either terraced blocks in relationship to Trevor Road properties. The only rear elevation within the development facing towards Trevor Road would be that of the pair of 2 storey semi-detached houses at a distance of some 26metres - 32 metres from the corresponding rear walls of 5 - 7 Trevor Road. These details would not result in any material loss of amenity in planning terms to the occupiers of Trevor Road or Benslow Rise.
- 4.3.6 With regard to parking provision, the Local Planning Authority's adopted SPD applies a maximum standard across the District, outside town centres, of 1.50 spaces and 2.25 spaces for two and three bedroom houses respectively. Applying this maximum standard to the development, 23 spaces would be required. However, having regard to its sustainable location in transport terms next to the station and bus services and within walking distance of the town centre, I do not believe any valid objections can be raised to the provision of 18 spaces to serve the type and number of properties proposed. This conclusion reflects the provisions of the adopted SPD and PPG 13 - Transport. Similarly, although the majority of the plots would fall below the Local Plan rough guide of 75 sq. metre for rear gardens serving new housing, I do not believe that in this location and with the considerable existing mix of flatted and single family occupation properties, this shortfall presents a strong basis by itself for refusing permission to the application. The resultant density of the development would be 44 dwellings per hectare.

4.3.7 Finally, in respect of the demolition of the existing building on the site to enable the proposed development to be carried out, it is a material consideration in the determination of this application to have regard to the fact that the building is currently afforded no protection in terms of Conservation Area or listed building status. Neither is it included in the Council's Register of Locally Important Buildings. Both the Hitchin Conservation Area and Register were reviewed with local consultation in 1998. Members may have heard the term spot listing. This is where a request may be made to English Heritage, on behalf of the Government, to consider individual buildings for statutory listing. This may be carried out by a Local Authority or any private body or individual. Principles of selection are clearly set out in Government Guidance (PPG15). Being aware of these procedures the views of the Council's Principal Conservation Officer were sought in association with the original application. She advised as follows:

" The house is a well built mid-19th century villa with acknowledged connections with a well known local family. I understand that there is an issue about seeking the listing of the building. It is important to consider the criteria for this. They are based on national rather than local issues. Early 19th century and even earlier structures are generally Listed, if substantially intact, because of their generally limited numbers. Nationally, so many more Victorian buildings remain that listing is selectively considered to identify more important architectural works including representative examples of building types, technological and planning innovations and nationally important historical connections. From my experience this would not include houses comparable with no. 89".

4.3.8 Pre-empting any approach that might be made to have the building listed , the applicant commissioned the preparation of a report to accompany the current application prepared by consultants with specialised expertise in advising upon historic buildings. Their conclusion is that the building does not meet the criteria for inclusion on the Statutory list. Their 18 page report with maps and photographs is available for members to inspect. I have copied the sections: Assessment of Significance and Conclusions as Appendix 2 to this report. In response to this report the Principal Conservation Officer has commented, inter alia, as follows:

"The building has the character of a straightforward mid-19th century house with later 19th century unexceptional additions, subsequent unsympathetic extension and substantial internal alterations. Of a period of building from which a large number of houses survive across the country and many of substantially greater quality and interest, I would concur fully with the conclusion that the building is unlistable and generally unexceptional in terms of Victorian architecture generally. What character it has been seriously harmed by 20th century alterations".

5.0 **Conclusion**

5.1 Bearing in mind the critical comments made by some members of the general public in Hitchin during recent months against the number of applications proposing one and two bedroom flat development in the town, I believe the committee will welcome a proposal for small housing units. These are shown to be satisfactorily accommodated within the site without any material harm in planning terms to the streetscene or the amenities of adjoining residential occupiers. Notwithstanding a contemporary design approach for the two terrace blocks within the site, I do not consider there to be any strong objection to raise to what is, of its type, good design - certainly not to a degree that would justify the refusal of permission. Although the existing building is not afforded any Conservation Area or listed building protection, its historic or architectural qualities do not, in any event, meet the necessary criteria for inclusion on the statutory list.

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 In making decisions on applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning legislation, the Council is required to have regard to the provisions of the development plan and to any other material considerations. The decision must be in accordance with the plan unless the material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the decision is to refuse or restrictive conditions are attached, the applicant has a right of appeal against the decision.

7.0 Recommendation

- 7.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting, approved documents and plans, or with minor modifications of those details which have previously been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority as being not materially different from those thereby permitted.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

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. **Before any part of the development hereby approved is first commenced full details of the proposed planting of trees, shrubs, hedges and grassed areas as shown on the approved layout plan, including information on the species proposed, size and density of planting together with a written specification for their works and their subsequent maintenance, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**

Reason: To ensure the submitted details are sufficiently comprehensive to enable proper consideration to be given to the appearance of the completed development.

5. The approved details of landscaping shall be carried out before the end of the first planting season following either the first occupation of any of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; and any trees or plants which, within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced during the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority agrees in writing to vary or dispense with this requirement.

Reason: To safeguard and enhance the appearance of the completed development and the visual amenity of the locality.

6. Before the commencement of any other works on the site, trees to be retained shall be protected by the erection of temporary chestnut paling or chain link fencing of a minimum height of 1.2 metres on a scaffolding framework, located at the appropriate minimum distance from the tree trunk in accordance with Table 1 in 'Trees in relation to Construction' (BS5837:2005), unless in any particular case the Local Planning Authority agrees to dispense with this requirement. The fencing shall be maintained intact for the duration of all engineering and building works. No building materials shall be stacked or mixed within 10 metres of the tree. No fires shall be lit where flames could extend to within 5 metres of the foliage, and no notices shall be attached to trees.

Reason: To prevent damage to or destruction of trees to be retained on the site in the interests of the appearance of the completed development and the visual amenity of the locality.

7. Before the access is first brought into use vehicle to vehicle visibility splays of 4.5 metres by 90 metres in both directions. Within which there shall be no obstruction to visibility between 600mm and 2.0 metres above the footway level. These measurements shall be taken from the intersection of the centre line of the permitted access with the edge of the carriageway of the highway respectively into the application site and from the intersection point along the edge of the carriageway.

Reason: To provide adequate visibility for drivers entering and leaving the site.

8. Before the access is first brought into use 10 metre radii pedestrian visibility zones shall be provided and permanently maintained each side of the access. They shall be measured from the tangent point of radius kerbs and maintained from the rear footway edging of the highway boundary. Therefore forming a segmental visibility zone. Within which, there shall be no obstruction to visibility between 600mm and 2.0 metres above the footway level.

Reason: To provide adequate visibility for drivers entering and leaving the site.

9. The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until the proposed access has been constructed and the existing vehicle crossover and the footway has been reinstated to the current specification of Hertfordshire County Council and to the local Planning Authority's satisfaction.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and amenity.

10. The access shall be 4.8 metres wide for the first 10 metres and the kerb radii shall be 6 metres, which shall include a pram crossing complete with tactile feature.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and amenity.

11. Any gates provided shall be set back a minimum of 10 metres from back of the footway and shall open inwards to the site.

Reason: To allow a vehicle to wait clear of the carriageway or footway while the gates are being opened and closed.

12. The development shall not be brought into use until a properly consolidated and surfaced turning space for vehicles as drawing number 1306/P2A has been provided within the curtilage of the site. The turning space should be free from obstruction and available for use at all times.

Reason: To allow vehicles to enter and leave the site in forward gear in the interests of highway safety.

13. The access shall be constructed in a hard surfacing material for the first 10 metres from the edge of the carriageway.

Reason: To prevent loose material from passing onto the public highway which may be detrimental to highway safety.

14. Prior to the first use of the proposal, nineteen (19) parking spaces as shown on the approved drawing shall be provided and appropriately marked out within the curtilage of the site. The parking facilities shall thereafter be kept available solely for the parking of motor vehicles and shall therefore be permanently retained as provided thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and amenity.

Reason for Decision

The proposed development would have no material adverse impact upon the amenities of nearby occupiers or the visual amenity of the locality nor conditions of local highway safety and satisfactorily complies with the following relevant policies of the Development Plan:

County Structure Plan Review 1991-2011:

Policy 1 - Sustainable Development

Policy 22 - Reduction of Travel Need and Car Usage

Policy 25/Supplementary Planning Guidance - Parking Standards

District Local Plan No 2 with Alterations:

Policy 1 - Pattern and Character of North Hertfordshire

Policy 26 - Housing Proposals

Policy 55 - Parking Standards plus Supplementary Planning Document:
Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development

Policy 57 - Residential Guidelines and Standards

ITEM NO: 2	<u>Location:</u>	Land off Walsworth Road (adjacent to B & Q Store and rear of 59-69, Dacre Road) Hitchin
	<u>Applicant:</u>	Weston Homes plc
	<u>Proposal:</u>	Residential development of 92 dwellings comprising 23 one bedroom and 58 two bedroom flats in 2 blocks of 3 & 4 storeys over a semi-basement parking area for 87 vehicles. 8 two bedroom & 3 four bedroom 2 & 3 storey terraced houses with 10 parking spaces. New vehicular & pedestrian access via Walsworth Road. Emergency and service 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)
	<u>Ref.No:</u>	06/02607/ 1
	<u>Officer:</u>	Graham Haerle 01462 474209

Date of expiry of statutory period : 02 March 2007

Reason for Referral to Committee

Site area exceeds 0.5 hectares.

1.0 Relevant History

- 1.1 Outline permission was granted for the redevelopment of the site for residential purposes and new vehicular access by decision notice dated the 21st June 2005, following completion of a 106 planning agreement. That decision reserved approval to details of the siting, design and external appearance of the buildings and landscaping. Conditions attached to the decision required, inter alia, full details of the approved new vehicular access off Walsworth Road and prevented any vehicular access via the existing driveway between 64 and 66 Dacre Road unless previously approved by the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.2 The applicants purchased the site in August 2005 and submitted an application for approval of details proposing a contemporary design flat development plus houses on the 12th September. At its meeting on the 8th November this committee agreed the officer recommendation of refusal: the decision is copied as Appendix 1.
- 1.3 A second application for a more traditionally designed scheme and seeking to address the objections previously raised was submitted on the 30th January. This was also refused by this committee following officer recommendation on the 18th April 2006.(Decision notice copied as Appendix 2). An appeal lodged against that refusal and heard at local inquiry was dismissed. (Inspector's decision letter of the 31st July 2006 copied as Appendix 3).

- 1.4 Following the lodge of their appeal but before the local inquiry commenced on the 27th June last year, Weston Homes sought to resolve the objections that had been raised by the County Highway Authority (reasons 3 and 4). This was achieved with agreement being reached between the applicant's transport consultants and the highway authority for all private vehicles to access the site via Walsworth Road and for emergency and service vehicles only to use the existing access between 64 and 66 Dacre Road. The latter arrangement requires alterations to be made to the "build-out" areas within the carriageway in the locality of the access although this would not result in any net loss of kerb-side parking spaces. The requirements of the relevant conditions of the outline permission (nos. 6 and 11) were subsequently approved by the Local Planning Authority on the 6th July 2006.
- 1.5 This further application, seeking approval of the outstanding details reserved for approval by the original June 2005 outline permission, was submitted to the Council on the 1st December following negotiations with your officers.

2.0 Policies

- 2.1 Listed below are those Development Plan policies relevant to this application for the approval of details:
- 2.2 **County Structure Plan Review 1991 - 2011:**
Policy 25/Supplementary Planning Guidance - Car Parking
- 2.3 **District Local Plan No 2 with Alterations:**
Policy 1 - Pattern & Character of North Hertfordshire
Policy 26 - Housing Proposals
Policy 29A - Affordable Housing
Policy 55 - Parking Standards/Supplementary Planning Document - Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development
Policy 57 - Residential Guidelines and Standards

3.0 Representations

- 3.1 **County Highway Authority** - although the highway conditions attached to the original outline permission have now been discharged, the Area Highway officer has confirmed that the layout embodied in the current application remains acceptable.
- 3.2 **Hertfordshire Constabulary** - have re-iterated their advice regarding the need for security to the internal parking area in accordance with the national guidance "Safer Parking - Park Mark": Recommends the development achieves the "Secured by Design" Standard.
- 3.3 **District Council's Housing Development Liaison Officer** - has agreed with the applicant's the required mix and tenure for the affordable housing element of the scheme.

- 3.4 **Local Residents** - 4 letters received from the occupiers of **74 Walsworth Road; 66A Dacre Road; 7, The Cloisters** and **51 Radcliffe Road** raising the following points:
- 1) number of flats remains excessive; concern at another development in the town; is it needed.
 - 2) 4 storeys remains too high; Block A will overlook 2 storey Victorian terraces opposite; Block B will not fit into the Nightingale Road streetscene;
 - 3) design is not of a high enough standard; this is a "gateway" site and any design should enhance the area; choice of external materials to include white render is inappropriate
 - 4) inadequate parking; problems of allocation of spaces
 - 5) access via Dacre Road will cause disruption; danger to pedestrians and children using this access; loss of parking outside 64 and 66 Dacre Road
 - 6) will the development be carbon neutral.

4.0 Planning Considerations

4.1 Site & Surroundings

- 4.1.1 The site of 0.65 hectares sits generally behind properties in Dacre Road (Nos 59 – 68), the B&Q store and the Kwik-Fit tyre and exhaust centre and adjoining former petrol filling station in Walsworth Road. The site has a frontage of approximately 45m to Walsworth Road, between the former petrol filling station which is now vacant and the yard serving B&Q. The rear boundary of the site flanks the B&Q customer car park.
- 4.1.2 On the opposite side of the road is a row of 6 two storey terraced late Victorian houses (Nos 74-79), continuing as more substantial 2 storey properties Nos 80-87 with similar scale period housing on 2 and 3 storeys Nos 55-58 beyond Kwikfit on the north side of the road. Opposite B&Q and turning the corner of Walsworth Road/Station Approach is the modern 3/4 storey office development Lyon Court, built some 10 years ago.

4.2 Proposal/Key Issues

- 4.2.1 Normally these two headings in a committee report are separated. However, in this instance the determination of this further application turns upon whether the details as now proposed satisfactorily address these aspects of the previously refused scheme which the appeal Inspector found unacceptable. It is appropriate therefore to move directly to those aspects and consider the nature and scale of changes that have been made.
- 4.2.2 To do this I have highlighted in the margin of the Inspector's decision letter (Appendix 3) those paragraphs in which he draws his conclusions upon the principal issues that he considered and have underlined those aspects which he found unacceptable.
- 4.2.3 To summarise, he agreed with the Council's view that, a) the height of 17 metres for the major part of Block A, fronting Walsworth Road, would appear excessively large and be overbearing in the streetscene; b) that the 5 storey 19 metre high section and the overall height and length of Block B at the rear of the site and facing the B&Q car park would be out of scale with adjacent buildings; "despite the relatively limited visibility of the site from Nightingale Road it would appear overly dominant" and c) that the close proximity (2 m) and height difference between the end of Block B and the adjoining row of 2 storey terraced houses would appear overbearing and give a cramped appearance.

- 4.2.4 The applicant's task has clearly been to positively address these outstanding objections. Through discussions and meetings with your officers I am satisfied that this has been achieved. Subject to some detailed refinements to the plans as now submitted I thus conclude this report with a favourable recommendation.
- 4.2.5 A comparison between the refused plans and the current revised application provides the best opportunity to judge whether the Council's previous objections as endorsed by the Inspector have been overcome. Taking the 3 aspects as listed in para 4.2.3, the changes are as follows:

Block A - this has been reduced from a 4 storey building with the major part being 17metres high to a 3 storey building 12.5metres (max) high. This height is now commensurate with the more substantial existing 2/3 storey period terrace properties in the locality and also the scheme for the adjoining petrol filling station site (no 63 Walsworth Road) which was granted permission at the last meeting. The design has also been significantly improved with strong gable roof forms and window proportions reflecting comparable features within the street. Considerable thought has been given to the treatment of the right-hand end section as viewed from the road: I support the applicant's decision to emphasise this section by projecting it forwards and angling the front wall towards the approach view from the station. Principal materials would be red brick and grey roof tiles: the left-hand section above the entrance archway to the semi-basement parking area would be rendered. These would all reflect existing materials in the road.

Block B - this has been reduced from part 5 storey (max 19 metres high) and part 4 storey (15.2 metres high) facing the B&Q car park for a length of some 52 metres to a part 4 (14.4 metres high) and part 3 (12.3 metres) storey building extending for some 60 metres although "separated" by a glazed link to provide a visual break. As with Block A, significant improvements have been made to the design. The height of the adjoining shallow mansard roof of B&Q has been accurately surveyed and found to be 10.2 metres rather than 9 metres as previously quoted.

Relationship between Block B and the adjoining terrace

The previous unsatisfactory 2/4 storey relationship, separated by a narrow gap of 2 metres, has now been satisfactorily resolved by designing a 3 storey end of terrace "townhouse" separated by a gap of 4.5 metres from the adjoining 3 storey end section of Block B. There would be an acceptable difference in roof height of 2.5 metres as compared with the previous difference of some 8.5 metres.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 Other detailed matters associated with the development as now proposed, such as access vis Walsworth Road and Dacre Road (see para 1.4), amenity space incorporating a childrens play area, semi-basement parking area and landscaping, do not directly influence the outcome of this application since they have either been found to be acceptable in dealing with the previous appeal scheme, or have been approved as part of the original outline conditions. This also applies to several of the comments made by local residents upon this latest application. Insofar as those aspects of the appeal scheme are concerned which were found to be unacceptable, this further application and the significant changes it proposes has, in my opinion, satisfactorily addressed the Council's previous objections and the appeal Inspector's reasons for dismissing the applicant's appeal.

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 In making decisions on applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning legislation, the Council is required to have regard to the provisions of the development plan and to any other material considerations. The decision must be in accordance with the plan unless the material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the decision is to refuse or restrictive conditions are attached, the applicant has a right of appeal against the decision.

7.0 Recommendation

- 7.1 That approval of these reserved matters submitted pursuant to outline permission Local Authority Reference: 03/00959/ 1 be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. No development shall take place until details and samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted, to include external balconies, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

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

2. Prior to the commencement of construction of the podium deck between Blocks A & B, full details of soft and hard landscape works together with boundary treatment shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These shall include details of the tree and plant species proposed, their size and density of planting together with a written specification of the method of planting and subsequent maintenance. The hard landscaping and boundary treatment details as approved shall be carried out and completed prior to the first occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a programme to be previously agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The soft landscaping details as approved shall be carried out within the first planting season following the first occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a programme to be previously agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any tree which, within a period of 3 years from being first planted, dies or is seriously damaged shall be replaced during the next planting season with a tree of similar size and species unless the Local Planning Authority agrees in writing to vary or dispense with this requirement.

Reason: To ensure the submitted details are sufficiently comprehensive to enable proper consideration to be given to the appearance of the completed development.

3. Prior to commencement of construction of the podium deck between Blocks A and B full details of the Local Area for Play shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The play area as approved shall be provided as part of the overall approved landscaping details and shall thereafter be permanently retained solely for this purpose and maintained in a satisfactory condition.

Reason: To ensure the permanent provision of a satisfactory play area to serve the proposed development.

4. **Before any site works associated with this development are commenced, survey details of existing ground levels together with details of proposed building levels shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority following which the development shall be carried out in accordance with these details.**

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in a satisfactory manner having regard to the ground levels of the application site and adjoining properties.

5. Demolition and all building work associated with the development hereby approved shall be restricted to between the hours of 7.30 am and 6.00 pm Mondays to Fridays and between the hours of 8.00 am and 1.00 pm on Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Reason: To safeguard the general amenities of nearby occupiers.

6. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 as amended, no development as set out in Class A of Part 2 of Schedule 2 to the Order shall be carried out without first obtaining a specific planning permission from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: Given the nature of this development, the Local Planning Authority considers that development which would normally be "permitted development" should be retained within planning control in the interests of the character and amenities of the area.

ITEM NO: 3	<u>Location:</u>	King George V Playing Field, Old Hale Way, Hitchin, SG5 1XL
	<u>Applicant:</u>	NHDC
	<u>Proposal:</u>	Erection of 6 x 8m floodlight columns in association with the refurbishment of existing tennis courts
	<u>Ref.No:</u>	06/02116/ 1
	<u>Officer:</u>	Joanne Cousins 01462 474418

Date of expiry of statutory period : 20 December 2006

Reason for Delay

Committee cycle

Reason for Referral to Committee

The application requires committee consideration as the site is owned by this Authority.

1.0 Relevant History

- 1.1 Various applications since 1974 for extensions and alterations to the clubhouse, in association with Hitchin Rugby Club.
- 1.2 Permission granted in 1994 for the retention of 3 additional floodlights for Hitchin Rugby Club.
- 1.3 Permission granted in February 2004 for the installation of six 16m high floodlights associated with the use of rugby pitch for training purposes.

2.0 Policies

2.1 North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No 2 with Alterations

Policy 21 - Landscape and Open Space Patterns in Towns
 Policy 22 - Urban Environment
 Policy 39 - Leisure Uses

3.0 Representations

3.1 Environmental Health - make the following comments:

- 1. Areas of environmental concern relate to noise from the installation and refurbishment works and increase in the pre-existing illuminance at light sensitive locations. There is residential accommodation in the vicinity of the application site.
- 2. Light - There is the potential for light to cause nuisance.
- 3. Environmental Health Legislation - the submitted details appear to comply with the Institution of Lighting Engineers Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Light

Pollution. It would be expedient to add a condition to ensure that the installation complies with the details provided and these standards are satisfactorily met.

3.2 **Site Publicity** - no representations received.

4.0 Planning Considerations

4.1 Site & Surroundings

4.1.1 King George V Playing field is situated north of Bearton Green, between Old Hale Way and Bedford Road. The site comprises Rugby Club facilities located in the eastern side of the playing fields with play areas and tennis courts to the south of these facilities, accessed by the main entrance opposite Brampton Park Road. The site of the flood lighting is an area to the rear of the Club building and pavilion.

4.2 Proposal

4.2.1 The application proposes 6 x 8 metre high lighting columns, to provide coverage to the existing tennis courts, an area approx. 18.5 metres deep by 18 metres wide. The technical data submitted with the application illustrates the lighting positioning and orientation and provides contour details to demonstrate a minimum light spillage.

4.2.2 In association with the lighting proposals the existing tennis courts would be refurbished and converted into a Multi Use Games Area, thus enabling additional sports such as five a side football, netball and basketball as well as the existing tennis facility.

4.3 Key Issues

4.3.1 The key planning issues in the consideration of this application are whether the development accords with the provisions of the Development Plan and the affect these lights would have on the amenities of local residents living along Old Hale Way and in the vicinity of the site.

4.3.2 The lighting is required to support a well established local facility within an area used for active sports. Accordingly the proposals would not conflict with local plan policies in my view. The position of the proposed lights is such that the nearest residential buildings would be 70 metres distant (Old Hale Way). The properties are screened to some extent by trees and hedging to the footpath through the playing fields and along the rear of boundaries of the properties. Whilst I accept that the lighting due to its height would be visible from local dwellings, I am satisfied that the design is such as to minimise any undue impact upon the residential amenities they currently enjoy. The area is suburban in character and is already subject to the existing floodlights on the playing field which do not cause any demonstrable harm in my view.

4.4 Conclusion

4.4.1 I am of the view that the technical details submitted are satisfactory to demonstrate that the lighting would have a minimal impact upon this locality. This view is supported by the Environmental Health Officer. I would agree with the recommendation to impose a restrictive condition to control the specific lighting to safeguard the amenities of nearby residential properties. In addition I would wish to see the hours of use restricted to 9.00 p.m. to conform with the conditions imposed on the grant of planning permission in 2004 for the Rugby Club lighting.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 In making decisions on applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning legislation, the Council is required to have regard to the provisions of the development plan and to any other material considerations. The decision must be in accordance with the plan unless the material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the decision is to refuse or restrictive conditions are attached, the applicant has a right of appeal against the decision.

6.0 Recommendation

- 6.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting, approved documents and plans, or with minor modifications of those details which have previously been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority as being not materially different from those thereby permitted.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

3. The floodlights hereby approved shall not be used after 9.00 p.m. on any day.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of nearby residential properties.

4. The development shall not proceed otherwise than in accordance with the submitted technical details on the installation of Rhea AL5210 floodlighting mounted on 6 lighting columns 8m high, and accompanying spillage chart design ref: UKS3240/1.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of occupiers of nearby residential premises.

Reason for Decision

The proposed work would have no material effect upon the amenities of the neighbouring residential properties and complies with the relevant policies in the Development Plan as summarised below:

North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No 2 with Alterations

Policy 21 - Landscape and Open Space Patterns in Towns
Policy 22 - Urban Environment
Policy 39 - Leisure Uses

ITEM NO: 4	<u>Location:</u>	26 Willoughby Way, Hitchin, SG4 9LW
	<u>Applicant:</u>	Mr & Mrs E Farrugia
	<u>Proposal:</u>	Single storey rear extension following demolition of existing conservatory
	<u>Ref.No:</u>	06/02696/ 1HH
	<u>Officer:</u>	Chris Carter 01462 474477

Date of expiry of statutory period : 24 January 2007

Reason for Referral to Committee

One of the applicants is an employee of the Council.

1.0 Relevant History

None

2.0 Policies

2.1 North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No.2 with Alterations

Policy 28 - House Extensions

3.0 Representations

3.1 **Local residents** - No representations received

4.0 Planning Considerations

4.1 Site & Surroundings

4.1.1 6 Willoughby Way is a semi detached property on a small plot with a south westerly facing rear garden approximately 17 metres long.

4.2 Proposal

4.2.1 Permission is sought for a single storey rear extension across the width of the rear of the property, approximately 3.4 metres in depth and following the demolition of the existing conservatory.

4.3 Key Issues

4.3.1 The key issue is impact on the neighbouring properties. The attached neighbouring property, No. 24 has an existing rear single storey extension that the proposed extension at No. 26 would match, both in terms of design and size. Consequently, there would be no material impact on No.24.

4.3.2 I do not consider there to be any detrimental impact on the neighbour at No 28 as there would be no side windows in the proposed extension.

4.4 Conclusion

4.4.1 Having regard to the above I do not consider there to be any material planning objections to raise against the proposal.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 In making decisions on applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning legislation, the Council is required to have regard to the provisions of the development plan and to any other material considerations. The decision must be in accordance with the plan unless the material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the decision is to refuse or restrictive conditions are attached, the applicant has a right of appeal against the decision.

6.0 Recommendation

6.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting, approved documents and plans, or with minor modifications of those details which have previously been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority as being not materially different from those thereby permitted.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

Reason for Decision

The extension, hereby permitted, would have no adverse effect on the amenities of the neighbouring residential properties or the visual amenity of the locality and, as such, complies with the relevant provisions of the development plan, as summarised below.

Summary of Development Plan Policies and Proposals relevant to the Decision:-

North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No 2 with Alterations
Policy 28- House Extensions

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No.

7

TITLE OF REPORT: PLANNING APPEALS

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL

This report will be presented in the format of an oral presentation.

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TITLE OF REPORT : PROPOSAL OF FURTHER OPTIONS REGARDING REDUCED RENTS FOR HITCHIN TUESDAY AND SATURDAY MARKETS AND TO REQUEST FUNDS TO ASSIST THE CONTINUATION OF THE SCHEME.

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To request Hitchin Committee Members to consider further options that will enable the continuation of a reduced rents scheme on Hitchin Tuesday and Saturday Markets.
- 1.2 To request Hitchin Committee Members to consider and agree a financial contribution towards the options that are covered in this report.
- 1.3 It would also be requested that Hitchin Area Committee rank the proposals in Appendix A in order of preference, so they may be submitted to Cabinet at the Cabinet meeting on 30 January 2007.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This Report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Officers presented a report to Hitchin Area Committee on 12 December 2006, this report was then presented to Cabinet on 19 December 2006 (see Appendix B). The report provided an update of the 6 month reduction of stall rents scheme on Hitchin Tuesday and Saturday Markets and requested a decision, as to whether the scheme should continue after the trial period.
- 3.2 The Cabinet Committee resolved the following:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That officers investigate a re-calculation of the reduced charges for each stall on Hitchin Market, in order to offset the budgetary shortfall resulting from the current 6 month reduced rents trial;
- (2) That a decision on whether or not to extend the 6 month market stall rent reduction trial be deferred, and that the matter be re-considered by Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 30 January 2007;
- (3) That the Hitchin Committee be requested to consider and agree a financial contribution towards the extension of the trial at its meeting to be held on 23 January 2007.

- 3.3 Cabinet have recommended to 18 January 2007 meeting of Council, that the current Reduced Rents Scheme on Hitchin Tuesday and Saturday Markets, be extended by four weeks, to enable Hitchin Area Committee to discuss and explore the potential options and funding to allow the continuation of a Reduced Rents Scheme.

4. STALL/PITCH RENTAL OPTIONS

- 4.1 There are different ways in which stall charges are set, historically the Council has used the cost per frontage/linear foot, however, recently with the Hitchin Tuesday and Saturday Markets there has been a flat rate charge that has been used, this section will discuss both.

4.2 Rent per frontage/linear foot.

- 4.2.1 Traditionally this is the way that most Market Operators have designated the cost to rent a stall. This provides a fair and equitable way of paying for a pitch as traders pay for the space that they are using.

- 4.2.2 The Hitchin Market Traders Association are not in favour of this type of pricing structure, as they believe it can be confusing to some Traders.

4.3 Flat Rate Rent.

- 4.3.1 This is an easier way of renting a pitch, as all stalls are the same price, however, those traders using a 14foot stall are at a greater advantage to those who have a significantly smaller stall. Therefore, most traders try to get as big a stall as possible to ensure better value for money. By using this method, it is important that the price for the smaller stalls are not too expensive as this could deter traders if the larger stalls are all used.

4.4 General.

- 4.4.1 Using both of the above pricing structures, Casual Traders can be enticed to become Licensed, by charging them a higher rent than Licensed Traders, whether it be by frontage/linear foot or by flat rate per stall.

- 4.4.2 The timing of any new reduced rental schemes is essential, as February and March are during the 'Kipper' season and a very slow time of year for all Traders. Possibly the most appropriate time for a change in schemes would be at the beginning of the new financial year (2007-2008), when the slower retail period starts to pick up, that is why two of the options show the £10 and £15 scheme staying in place until the end of period 13 (17 March 2007).

- 4.4.3 Appendix A shows options that incorporate the above pricing structures, the table identifies potential risks associated to these schemes, which include financial, footfall and trader morale issues.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 No legal implications have been identified.

6. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Full Council approved £31k to make up for the potential shortfall for the reduction in rents. This was an estimate taking into consideration the current market trends and actual income. The estimated losses for the full 6 month trial period currently stands at £37,223.
- 6.2 If Council approve extending the current 6 Month Trial Period for an additional 4 weeks it could potentially cost an additional £5,000.
- 6.3 The new options shown in Appendix A, will help to improve the current financial position, however it is anticipated that there will be an estimated loss of between £5,000 and £19,000 if any option is introduced until the end of July 2007.
- 6.4 It has been hard to estimate the actual losses, as it is dependant on which option is introduced, as trader behaviour could change in terms of the way that they rent stalls and the sizes and number of the stalls they occupy. Casual Traders could also be inclined to become Licensed, this could affect the level of income received.
- 6.5 The variances have been calculated using a flat rate budget (yearly budget divided by 12) as of 1 April 2007.
- 6.6 No Human Resource implications have been identified.

7. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 7.1 Officers met with the Hitchin Market Traders Association on Monday 8 January 2007, to discuss the options shown in Appendix A and to explore other possible options.
- 7.2 The following points and comments were noted:
 - The Traders Association believe that it would be a mistake for the Reduced Rents Scheme for Hitchin Tuesday and Saturday Markets not to continue, as it has had a positive effect on the morale and footfall in general.
 - The Scheme should continue until a decision concerning the Churchgate development has been reached, or at least until the Management Arrangements of North Hertfordshire District Markets has been finalised.
 - The Traders Association also requested that their 2 year Business Plan be considered again, with a possible slight increase of rents at the end of the first year.
 - A suggestion put forward by the Traders was that of increasing the daily car parking charge by £1.50 and charging Casual Traders an administration fee of £3.00 per day. Also, ceasing the period of four weeks consecutive trading before being able to become a Licensed Trader, but charge one month's worth of parking to entice them to trade on the Market for longer. All these points are providing the trader constantly sells the commodity stated when they started trading.
 - The above option has not been provided, as it is anticipated that it will only create a small amount of revenue, leaving a £23,500 variance to budget.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The 'Kipper' season, that runs from January to March is a very difficult time of year to attract traders, therefore, if the trial continued during this period it is unlikely that utilisation would increase, however, traders we have already attracted are more likely to stay.
- 8.2 The reduced rents have had a positive impact on the morale of the market traders and it is believed that this in turn has contributed to the increased footfall. Therefore, if the trial is continued, although it is against the Council agreed budget strategy, it is likely to promote the economic vitality of the market which could also have a positive impact on other retailers in Hitchin.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Officers recommend that Members of Hitchin Area Committee consider and rank in order of preference, the options presented in Appendix A.
- 9.2 Officers recommend that Members of Hitchin Area Committee, allocate funds, should they be available, to aid the continuation of Reduced Rents on Hitchin Tuesday and Saturday Markets.

10. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To enable the continuation of a reduced rent scheme that will aid the vibrancy and vitality of Hitchin Market.

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A – Options Available and the Associated Risks.
- 11.2 Appendix B – December 2006 Cabinet Report

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 12.1 Lance Raperport
Market Manager
Lance.raperport@north-herts.gov.uk
01462 456202
- 12.2 Steven Crowley
Project Manager
Steve.crowley@north-herts.gov.uk
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Options Available and the Associated Risks

Options	Utilisation Risk	Financial Risk till the End of July	Other Factors
<p>Option 1</p> <p>Hitchin Tuesday = £12</p> <p>Hitchin Saturday = £18</p>	<p>Utilisation rates are likely to stay roughly the same, until March/April time, then increase as the 'kipper' season ends and the warmer trading months begin</p>	<p>£16,190 potential loss</p>	<p>Traders morale will be positive. Footfall might increase Improve vitality and vibrancy of market. At worst case scenario, there may be a small drop in utilisation at the start, however this will swiftly increase as of March/April.</p>
<p>Option 2</p> <p><u>Tuesday</u></p> <p>Casual: £1.50 per foot Licensed: £1.30 per foot</p> <p><u>Saturday</u></p> <p>Casual: £1.70 per foot Licensed: £1.90 per foot</p>	<p>Utilisation rates are likely to stay roughly the same, until March/April time, then increase as the 'kipper' season ends and the warmer trading months begin</p>	<p>£4,911 potential loss</p>	<p>Traders morale will be positive. Footfall might increase Improve vitality and vibrancy of market. At worst case scenario, there may be a small drop in utilisation at the start, however this will swiftly increase as of March/April.</p>

<p>Option 3</p> <p>Continue £10 & £15 Scheme until the end of period 13 and then initiate option 1</p>	<p>Utilisation rates are likely to stay roughly the same, until March/April time, then increase as the 'kipper' season ends and the warmer trading months begin</p>	<p>£18,794 potential loss</p>	<p>Traders morale will be positive. Footfall might increase Improve vitality and vibrancy of market. At worst case scenario, there may be a small drop in utilisation at the start, however this will swiftly increase as of March/April.</p>
<p>Option 4</p> <p>Continue £10 & £15 Scheme until the end of period 13 and then initiate option 2</p>	<p>Utilisation rates are likely to stay roughly the same, until March/April time, then increase as the 'kipper' season ends and the warmer trading months begin</p>	<p>£9,331 potential loss</p>	<p>Traders morale will be positive. Footfall might increase Improve vitality and vibrancy of market. At worst case scenario, there may be a small drop in utilisation at the start, however this will swiftly increase as of March/April.</p>
<p><u>Original Options that have already been presented to Cabinet and Hitchin Area Committee.</u></p>			
<p>Option 5 - That the 6 month trial ceases as at 23rd January 07, with the re-introduction of original 2006/07 rates.</p>	<p>Utilisation may decrease, potential that the majority of traders that have commenced trading since the introduction of the reduced rents might leave.</p>	<p>Achieve amended budgets for 2006/07.</p>	<p>Negative morale from traders. Footfall could reduce, if traders leave, as there will be a lesser scope of commodities. Vitality and vibrancy of market could be affected.</p>

APPENDIX A

<p>Option 6 - That the reduced rents are extended until the outcome of the Markets Future Management arrangements are agreed. The current anticipated date for this will be July 07.</p>	<p>Utilisation is likely to reduce during the kipper season, then slowly increase. However, would not expect the utilisation to achieve current levels, as Christmas is normally a time when utilisation peaks.</p>	<p>£30,000 potential loss.</p>	<p>Traders morale will be positive. Footfall might increase Improve vitality and vibrancy of market</p>
<p>Option 7 - That the reduced rents are extended for an extra year</p>	<p>Utilisation is likely to reduce during the kipper season, then slowly increase to achieve similar utilisation as current.</p>	<p>£60,000 potential loss.</p>	<p>Traders morale will be positive. Footfall may increase Improve vitality and vibrancy of market</p>

Options Available and the Associated Risks

Options	Utilisation Risk	Financial Risk till the End of July	Other Factors
<p>Option 1</p> <p>Hitchin Tuesday = £12</p> <p>Hitchin Saturday = £18</p>	<p>Utilisation rates are likely to stay roughly the same, until March/April time, then increase as the 'kipper' season ends and the warmer trading months begin</p>	<p>£16,190 potential loss</p>	<p>Traders morale will be positive. Footfall might increase Improve vitality and vibrancy of market. At worst case scenario, there may be a small drop in utilisation at the start, however this will swiftly increase as of March/April.</p>
<p>Option 2</p> <p><u>Tuesday</u></p> <p>Casual: £1.50 per foot Licensed: £1.30 per foot</p> <p><u>Saturday</u></p> <p>Casual: £1.70 per foot Licensed: £1.90 per foot</p>	<p>Utilisation rates are likely to stay roughly the same, until March/April time, then increase as the 'kipper' season ends and the warmer trading months begin</p>	<p>£4,911 potential loss</p>	<p>Traders morale will be positive. Footfall might increase Improve vitality and vibrancy of market. At worst case scenario, there may be a small drop in utilisation at the start, however this will swiftly increase as of March/April.</p>

<p>Option 3</p> <p>Continue £10 & £15 Scheme until the end of period 13 and then initiate option 1</p>	<p>Utilisation rates are likely to stay roughly the same, until March/April time, then increase as the 'kipper' season ends and the warmer trading months begin</p>	<p>£18,794 potential loss</p>	<p>Traders morale will be positive. Footfall might increase Improve vitality and vibrancy of market. At worst case scenario, there may be a small drop in utilisation at the start, however this will swiftly increase as of March/April.</p>
<p>Option 4</p> <p>Continue £10 & £15 Scheme until the end of period 13 and then initiate option 2</p>	<p>Utilisation rates are likely to stay roughly the same, until March/April time, then increase as the 'kipper' season ends and the warmer trading months begin</p>	<p>£9,331 potential loss</p>	<p>Traders morale will be positive. Footfall might increase Improve vitality and vibrancy of market. At worst case scenario, there may be a small drop in utilisation at the start, however this will swiftly increase as of March/April.</p>
<p><u>Original Options that have already been presented to Cabinet and Hitchin Area Committee.</u></p>			
<p>Option 5 - That the 6 month trial ceases as at 23rd January 07, with the re-introduction of original 2006/07 rates.</p>	<p>Utilisation may decrease, potential that the majority of traders that have commenced trading since the introduction of the reduced rents might leave.</p>	<p>Achieve amended budgets for 2006/07.</p>	<p>Negative morale from traders. Footfall could reduce, if traders leave, as there will be a lesser scope of commodities. Vitality and vibrancy of market could be affected.</p>

APPENDIX A

<p>Option 6 - That the reduced rents are extended until the outcome of the Markets Future Management arrangements are agreed. The current anticipated date for this will be July 07.</p>	<p>Utilisation is likely to reduce during the kipper season, then slowly increase. However, would not expect the utilisation to achieve current levels, as Christmas is normally a time when utilisation peaks.</p>	<p>£30,000 potential loss.</p>	<p>Traders morale will be positive. Footfall might increase Improve vitality and vibrancy of market</p>
<p>Option 7 - That the reduced rents are extended for an extra year</p>	<p>Utilisation is likely to reduce during the kipper season, then slowly increase to achieve similar utilisation as current.</p>	<p>£60,000 potential loss.</p>	<p>Traders morale will be positive. Footfall may increase Improve vitality and vibrancy of market</p>

TITLE OF REPORT: AN ARTS, MUSEUMS & HERITAGE STRATEGY FOR NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform all Area Committees of the development of an Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy for North Hertfordshire.
- 1.2 To request Area Committee comments on the draft Strategy prior to final consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on March 27th and then Council on 29th March 2007.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 1st December 2006.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 An outcome of Museums Service FSR (completed August 2005) was to develop a broader context for the consideration of the Museums and Galleries Services. Consequently, the Project Board set up to manage the implementation of the FSR recommendations agreed that an Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy for the district should be developed.
- 3.2 Arts activities in their widest sense take place in every town and village throughout North Hertfordshire, while the architectural and archaeological heritage of the District is spread around us. In the past, much of the Council's focus has been on arts, museums and heritage activities within the urban settings, but research underpinning this strategy suggests that there is a need to provide a more accessible service for all of our residents.
- 3.3 The development of the Strategy fits well within the Strategic Objectives of the Council as set out in the present Corporate Plan 2005-2015, in which there is a commitment to provide first-class leisure and cultural facilities for all our citizens, and also a commitment to protect the environment and conserve the heritage of our historic towns and villages.
- 3.4 The previous NHDC *Leisure & Cultural Strategy 2001-2005* endorsed these commitments, but this now needs updating. The forthcoming Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy will be incorporated in any future Leisure and Culture Strategy.
- 3.5 The Government, through the Arts Council, the Museums Libraries & Archives Council, and English Heritage, has a range of recent policy initiatives relating to the provision of arts, museums and heritage.

- 3.6 Living East, the Cultural Consortium for the East of England, produced a regional cultural strategy *A better life: The role of culture in the sustainable development of the East of England* in September 2006. Hertfordshire also has a County cultural strategy, *Enjoy! A Cultural Strategy for Hertfordshire 2002 -2007*. The NHDC strategy supports both the regional and the County strategies.
- 3.7 At a public consultation forum held in July 2006, an Arts, Museums & Heritage Working Group was established, to help develop an Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy. This group consists of representatives of many local groups and societies, all seven museums in the District, and interested Members and individuals.
- 3.8 This group has met on four occasions to give evidence, advice, ideas and comment upon the early stages of this draft strategy.
- 3.9 The outcomes of the consultation with Area Committees will be considered within the second draft that will be presented to the Arts, Museums and Heritage Forum at its meeting on 5th February 2007.

4. DRAFT ARTS, MUSEUMS & HERITAGE STRATEGY

- 4.1 The draft Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy and its Action Plan are set out in the attached documentation and the Area Committee is invited to comment upon these as part of a wider public consultation process prior to a final strategy being prepared for Cabinet and Council approval. In particular, the Area Committee is asked to focus on the relevance and importance of local artistic and heritage interests as well as having a wider view of activities that will benefit the whole district.
- 4.2 The draft Strategy sets out a common vision of Arts, Museums and Heritage Services for the District and identifies ways in which these services can help the Council and its partners achieve the vision – Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper.
- 4.3 The Strategy ensures linkages between national, regional and countywide initiatives whilst, at the same time, it welcomes the aspirations and ideas emerging from local consultations.
- 4.4 It will be used to identify these needs but to locate them in a strategic framework to help plan future provision in the areas of Arts, Museums and Heritage. It will also be used to increase the amount of external funding coming into the District, thereby helping to reduce NHDC subsidy levels.
- 4.5 The draft Strategy acknowledges that there are a number of extant strategies already in existence that impact upon Arts, Museums and Heritage in the District. This draft Strategy does not seek to replace these, but at a very minimum, to reflect the good work that already is happening and to consolidate all such plans within a clear context.
- 4.6 In the Action Plans, a series of specific plans and programmes are identified, some of which are already happening, but others are planned for future years.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Section 2 Local Government Act 2000 provides that the Council has power to do anything which it considers likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area.
- 5.2 There are no other legal implications.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 In 2006/07, the development of the Arts, Museums and Heritage Strategy has been managed within existing financial and human resources. The strategy has been progressed by seconding the Cultural Services Manager to the post of Project Manager, then providing temporary cover arrangements for the secondment. This arrangement is funded until March 2007, but the project officer post will need to be funded post March 2007. The additional cost is approximately £15,000.
- 6.2 The on-going costs could be met from a variety of sources, eg: Area Visioning and Area Committee Development Budgets, but also particularly by generating new forms of inward investment. Should the funding not be identified from these sources or corporate virement, the funding would have to be funded from balances.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no specific human resource implications pertaining to this report.
- 7.2 The development of an Arts, Museums and Heritage Strategy can, however, contribute significantly to raising awareness and improving understanding of the artistic and cultural diversity of all our communities in urban and rural settings and the implementation of activities and programmes to celebrate their richness and variety.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 There has been substantial consultation with a number of partner organisations and agencies in the drafting of this Strategy, but further consultation now needs to take place with Area Committees, Parish Councils, the Local Strategic Partnership, and other interested parties.
- 8.2 The consultations are planned to conclude on 31st January 2007 and any comments made will be reported back to Cabinet at its meeting on 27th March 2007.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That the Area Committee considers and makes comments on the draft Art, Museums and Heritage Strategy.
- 9.2 That comments so made will be incorporated into the final report for approval by Cabinet and Council at their respective meetings in March 2007.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To ensure that a wide consultation is undertaken on the Art, Museums and Heritage Strategy.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 11.1 The preparation of the draft Art, Museums and Heritage Strategy has considered a number of alternatives and options in determining the priorities expressed by local communities, and the most efficient provision of services.
- 11.2 The draft Strategy aims to provide an effective balance between the identified themes and the means by which these can be implemented.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix 1 – Draft Art, Museums & Heritage Strategy 2007 - 2011

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

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14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 14.1 As listed in Appendix 1 – The Art, Museums & Heritage Strategy

Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy

Work in progress

Draft Strategy for Arts, Museums & Heritage in North Hertfordshire

How to comment on this draft Strategy

We welcome your feedback to ensure that this Strategy reflects the views of as many residents of the District as possible. The consultation period will run from 6 December to 31 January 2007. Comments must be submitted by 5pm on 31 January 2007.

Please e-mail comments to: ros.allwood@north-herts.gov.uk

or post to:

Ros Allwood,
Cultural Services Manager,
Museum Resource Centre,
Burymead Road,
Hitchin,
Herts.,
SG5 1RT.

nb. We hope that the final Strategy document will be in colour, with illustrations throughout.

North Hertfordshire District Council Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy

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Welcome by Leader of the Council
Executive summary
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Scope:
 Arts
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Welcome to North Hertfordshire District Council's first Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy.

[Insert paragraph here]

Cllr. F J Smith

Leader of the Council

1. Executive Summary *[To come]*

2. Introduction

2.1 This Strategy outlines the role of Arts, Museums and Heritage in North Hertfordshire, and identifies ways in which Arts, Museums and Heritage services can help North Hertfordshire District Council achieve its strategic objectives. It examines the existing provision across the District, ensuring that recommendations are attuned to local needs. The Strategy identifies priorities for Arts, Museums & Heritage in North Hertfordshire, and will be used to plan future provision in all these fields. Our aim is to increase significantly the amount of external funding for Arts, Museums and Heritage coming into the district over the next five years, and the Strategy will help make this ambition a reality.

2.2 Partnership working is key both to central government thinking and to local authorities. This strategy takes account of recent national, regional and county objectives, and will help North Hertfordshire District Council work with its Local Strategic Partners. It demonstrates that the Council values Arts, Museums & Heritage, and the success stories show how Arts, Museums & Heritage already make a positive contribution to the district.

3. Context

3.1 **Fundamental Service Review**

This Strategy grew out of the District Council's *Fundamental Service Review* (also known as a *Best Value Review*) of its Museum Service undertaken in 2004-5. Although the Review found that visitors greatly valued all aspects of the service (Hitchin Museum & Art Gallery, Letchworth Museum & Art Gallery, the Education Service with its School Loans scheme, the Archaeology and Natural History services) the two museums were both described as unfit for purpose, and the Burymead Resource Centre as outdated and inefficient.

3.2 **The Review's Recommendations**

The Fundamental Service Review's main recommendations towards providing a better service for the whole district were as follows:

- To develop a Museum/Cultural Strategy
- To develop a new museum store/Resource Centre, possibly in partnership with other local museums
- To improve the School Loans scheme with partnership working
- To use IT to digitise the museum collections

- To close the two existing Council-run museums and instead run a museum and gallery on a single town-centre site, with a saving of £125,000.

These recommendations were approved by Cabinet in August 2005, and a Project Board formed from District Councillors and Officers was set up in November 2005 to implement the proposals (See Appendix 1) .

3.3 Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation

At the same time as the Council Review, the independent Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation had been reviewing its own museum in Letchworth, with the suggestion that an enlarged Letchworth Garden City Museum could open in Letchworth Town Hall. At present plans are still not definite, but if this were to go ahead all the Letchworth collections belonging to the Council and to the Heritage Foundation could be shown together in one museum. This could tell the story of the town from pre-history to the present day, ending the duplication of museum facilities in the Garden City.

3.4 Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy

Following a public consultation meeting about the Council proposals in January 2006, it was decided to set up five separate Working Groups, one for each of the Fundamental Service Review recommendations, beginning with the first one:

Production of a Museum/ Cultural Strategy
 New Museum store/ Resource Centre
 New Museum facilities
 Expanded Loan Service scheme
 Digitisation of the Museum Collections

It became clear that a new museums strategy was needed as soon as possible, to update the relevant section of the previous North Hertfordshire District Council *Leisure & Cultural Strategy 2001-2005*. At a second public consultation forum in July 2006 it was agreed to widen the scope of this strategy to include the arts and heritage as well as museums, and an Arts, Museums & Heritage Working Group was formed. This consisted of representatives of many local groups and societies, the seven North Hertfordshire museums, and interested individuals (see Appendix 2). The current strategy document is the result of this consultation forum, and will be incorporated in any future NHDC *Leisure & Cultural Strategy*.

3.5 The National and Regional Context

'Our aim is for everyone in the country to have the opportunity to develop a rich and varied artistic and creative life...We will know that we are making progress towards achieving this if by 2008 we can see:

- a more confident, diverse and innovative arts sector which is valued by, and in tune with, the communities it serves
- more active participation in the arts by adults and young people across the country'

Our agenda for the arts in the East of England 2006-8. Arts Council England

This NHDC Arts, Museums and Heritage Strategy supports key governmental strategies for the arts, for museums and for heritage. These are listed in Appendix 3.

3.5.1 The strategy also supports the latest regional cultural strategy, ***A better life: The role of culture in the sustainable development of the East of England*** (Living East, 2006)

which has the following four main themes:

- Embedding culture in growth and regeneration
- Developing creativity
- Growing cultural tourism
- Capturing the benefits of the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics

These themes provide a focus for investment and decision-making in the region over the next 10-20 years.

3.5.2 Hertfordshire has a County cultural strategy, ***Enjoy! A cultural strategy for Hertfordshire 2002-2007*** (Hertfordshire Cultural Partnership, 2002)

which has the following six key messages:

- Making Hertfordshire a more prosperous and attractive place to visit
- Offering children, young people and adults the opportunity to reach their full potential through access to learning and information
- Encouraging children and young people to access and enjoy cultural and leisure activities
- Enabling all members of the community to have more and easier access to different cultural and leisure pursuits
- Valuing and supporting the diverse range of cultural and leisure activities enjoyed across the county
- Working in partnership with national, regional and local agencies to deliver a range of cultural and leisure activities effectively

The NHDC strategy aims to help achieve these county goals within the North Hertfordshire District. It explains the importance of arts and heritage to us all, and incorporates ways in which they can be at the heart of community life.

3.6 The Local Context - North Hertfordshire

3.6.1 North Hertfordshire is predominantly a rural district, with three attractive market towns, the world's first Garden City, and a number of picturesque villages in 33 parishes. It covers 145 square miles/375 square kilometres of rolling country, following the chalk escarpment of the Chiltern Hills from the Bedfordshire boundary in the south west to the Cambridgeshire and Essex borders in the north east. The Icknield Way runs the length of the district, and other ancient trackways and Roman roads give North Herts. a particularly rich archaeological heritage. Baldock and Hitchin are two of only five towns in Hertfordshire listed by the Council for British Archaeology as of national importance; Baldock for its extraordinary wealth of Iron Age and Romano-British cemeteries, and Hitchin for its medieval street plan.

3.6.2 The population of North Hertfordshire is 119,000. The largest towns are Hitchin (pop. 30,360) and Letchworth (33,690). Royston follows at 14,290, and Baldock with 9260. The district is comparatively wealthy, with low unemployment, although there are pockets of deprivation. It has a very stable population, with more people of retirement age than the national average of 24%; in the towns 34% households contain at least one person of retirement age, and in the rural areas this rises to 43%. Under-16s make up 20% of the population. The cultural mix is the second-most ethnically diverse in Hertfordshire, with an ethnic minority population of 6.8%. This includes people of African, Bangladeshi, Caribbean, Chinese, Indian, Italian, Pakistani and Polish origin, who mostly live in Hitchin and Letchworth. The 2006 District Survey found that 95% of those questioned were satisfied with North Hertfordshire as a place to live.

3.6.3 The percentage of North Herts. residents who regularly visit museums is higher than the national average, and surveys consistently show a high satisfaction rate. However access for disabled visitors is generally poor; not one of the museums in the District has a lift enabling access to displays on different levels, and this is a major cause of public complaint. The newly refurbished Letchworth Arts Centre has had a lift installed, making it the only fully accessible community gallery space in the district.

4. Scope and definitions

This strategy covers a very wide subject area, and one which affects everyone living in the district. Even if we don't think that we take part in the arts, or visit museums, whenever we go outside we engage with the historic environment of the North Hertfordshire towns and villages.

The arts In the strategy the arts are defined as all forms of visual art, craft, design, video, film, the performing arts such as music and drama, literature and writing. These activities can be done by individuals or in groups, in public and in private.

Museums Museums are defined in the strategy as those museum collections which are open to the public, whether run by the public, private or voluntary sector.

Heritage In the strategy heritage refers to the architectural heritage of our historic towns and villages, and also the archaeology of the district, which together make up our urban and rural landscapes. The natural heritage is also covered by the countryside collections within the museums.

5. Inventory of Provision

As part of the consultation process undertaken to develop this strategy, we undertook an inventory of arts, museums and heritage provision in the district, looking at the type of provision, number of users, and costings. This information is given in Appendix 5.

The main findings are summarised in this section, under the three subject headings, arts, museums, heritage.

5.1 Arts

5.1.1 North Hertfordshire has a varied arts scene, with some excellent facilities, such as the re-launched Letchworth Arts Centre, and Benslow Trust's Lottery funded concert hall. The annual Rhythms of the World Festival in Hitchin is described as Europe's largest free world music festival, attracting around 35,000 visitors over two days in July. The many arts, craft and photography groups, and music and choral societies are listed in Appendix 3. North Herts. schools also provide a range of music, dance and drama performances, some of which are open to a wider public. Schools in Letchworth take part in an annual music festival at Plinston Hall, which also regularly shows tribute bands. There are a number of venues for contemporary live music, such as Hitchin's successful Club 85, Letchworth's Arena Tavern, and the Green Man in Royston. However there is a need for a live music venue for the under-18s, who are not allowed into licensed premises. Another gap is in venues for the performance of dance; there are almost no professional dance performances in the District.

5.1.2 For visual arts and craft, Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston Museums all show regular exhibitions by individual artists and local art and photographic societies. Although the emphasis is on local artists, the larger museums are able to mount contemporary and historic exhibitions of more than local significance, such as Letchworth Museum's Spencer Gore exhibition in 2006. There are a number of private galleries in North Herts.; ICAS Vilas Fine Art and Tuscany Galleries in Letchworth, James Perkins Fine Art, Wall Art and Worx of Art in Hitchin, the Ashwell Gallery in Ashwell. In addition to the museums, public art spaces in the district include the Letchworth Library gallery and the superb gallery space at the Letchworth Art Centre. Every autumn artists in the district open their studios under the Open Studios scheme, run by the Hertfordshire Visual Arts Forum. However there is a severe lack of affordable studio space for younger artists in the District.

5.1.3 North Hertfordshire has surprisingly little public art, historic or contemporary. Hitchin has none at all. In 2003 Commissions East, the public art development agency for the East of England, worked with NHDC to commission a piece of public art for a space beside Letchworth Town Hall, as part of the Garden City's Centenary celebrations. The sculpture 'Paradise Is' by Bettina Furnee was selected. Apart from the War Memorial, Letchworth's only other sculpture is a bust of Ebenezer Howard near Morrison's, commissioned by the Garden City Heritage Foundation. Baldock has a terracotta 'Owl and Pussy Cat' relief at St. Mary's Infant school by Franta Belsky. Royston has Royston War Memorial, 1922 by Clemons and Fagan; 'Millpole', a carved pole in Priory Memorial Gardens by Dennis Heath, 2000, and a 1991 sculpture outside Royston Library variously called 'Unison' or 'Unity', by Antonia Spowers. Recently an underpass in Letchworth's Grange Estate was painted by Scribble Artz in partnership with Stonehill School, and the project was so successful that there is now a plan for a similar project at the Jackmans Estate.

5.2 Museums

5.2.1 There are seven museums in the District, two of which are run by NHDC (Hitchin and Letchworth Museums). The others are Ashwell Museum, Baldock Museum, First Garden City Heritage Museum, Hitchin British Schools Museum, and Royston & District Museum. Between them, the museums hold hundreds of thousands of fascinating and often unique objects relating to the history, archaeology and ecology of the District, and also specialist material about Garden Cities (Heritage Museum) and education (British Schools Museum). In total they receive over 60,000 visitors a year. As a result of the interest generated by the consultation over this document, a North Herts. Museums Network is being set up, giving a forum for discussion over matters of mutual interest, such as partnership projects and shared publicity. A North Herts. Museums leaflet will be published in 2007, which will be an extremely useful promotional tool, and benefit all the museums.

5.2.2 Of the seven museums, only two, Ashwell Museum and the Hitchin British Schools Museum, are completely sure of remaining in their current locations for the foreseeable future. All the rest either will, or may possibly, be moving to new premises. Baldock Museum is currently unsure how long it be able to remain in Baldock Town Hall, and is in discussions about new premises. The First Garden City Heritage Foundation has published its desire to move the Heritage Museum to Letchworth Town Hall. If this were to take place, Letchworth Museum's Garden City collections could be displayed there, telling the town's story in one building. The non-Garden City material currently at Letchworth Museum could then combine with the Hitchin collections, plus the other NHDC archaeology, natural and social history, in one NHDC museum. Royston & District Museum is in discussions about a possible move at some date in the future – although this is not imminent.

5.2.3 Most of the museums in North Herts. have access problems; Ashwell and Baldock Museums are the only two on one level. None of the other museums is fully accessible, and none has a lift. Many of the museums have storage problems, with too little space, and without ideal temperature and humidity conditions for their objects. All the museums try to ensure access to their material as far as possible, and all will show material to visitors by appointment.

5.3 Heritage

5.3.1 North Hertfordshire has an unusually rich archaeological heritage, with 61 Scheduled Ancient Monuments – the most in any district in the county. It also has over 1700 listed buildings; 25 Grade 1, 105 Grade 2*, and 1604 Grade 2. These range from medieval timber-framed buildings to Arts & Crafts houses of the early 20th century. There are also 13 registered Historic Parks and Gardens, including Letchworth's Broadway Gardens, which were restored and revitalised with a Heritage Lottery Fund grant in 2003 (?). The district has 40 Conservation Areas. North Hertfordshire District Council has a statutory duty under the District Local Plan to conserve its historic environment.

5.3.2 Interest in the heritage of this area is shown by the large number of local history groups and societies, many of whose members undertake research into their particular town or village, often using their local museum for reference material. All these societies tend to rely on volunteers, often retired, for their organisation, and many find it hard to replace committee members.

5.3.3 Participation in the historic environment is deemed by English Heritage as one of the principal ways people express interest and place value on heritage. The government has set a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target to increase participation in heritage by people from under-represented groups (black and ethnic minority, and lower socio-economic groups, and those with a limiting disability) by 3% by 2008. One of the main ways English Heritage hopes to achieve this aim is through the *Heritage Open Day* scheme. Heritage Open Days are England's largest voluntary cultural event, co-ordinated by the Civic Trust in partnership with English Heritage. A large number of historic properties, museums and churches in North Herts. already take part in this scheme, with special public openings one weekend every July. Another annual heritage event is *National Archaeology Week*, held in July under the overall leadership of the Council for British Archaeology. It is supported by most of the museums, which put on a wide range of events and activities. These tend to be free, enabling wide access, and aimed at children as much as adults.

6. Strategic Policy Framework

6.1.1 Consultation has identified strong local interest in particular areas of the district. Where appropriate, this particular sense of place needs to be reflected in the strategy. However other areas, such as archaeology and natural history clearly have a district-wide perspective. The aim is to strike a balance between the local and the district provision.

6.1.2 Partnership-working is seen as the key to providing better services, and is encouraged by all national and regional agencies. Grant-giving bodies nowadays look far more kindly on partnership projects than on individual organisation, and the arts, museums and heritage of the District will increasingly depend on external funding for many of their projects.

6.1.3 Widening access is crucial to the success of the policy. All residents of North Herts. should have equal access to the many arts in their District, to the wide range of different museums, and to the rich archaeological, built and natural heritage. Currently access is denied to many – either through lack of information, or physically. The strategy aims to overcome these problems, allowing those who would like to participate, whatever their age, ethnic background or income level, the opportunity to do so.

6.1.4 Careful investment in the arts and museums has helped the economic regeneration of many different areas of the UK. North Herts. recognises this, and is keen to explore the potential of cultural schemes to drive regeneration and generate inward investment. The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will affect North Hertfordshire both socially and economically, and the arts,

museums and heritage sector needs to be aware of this, and to make the most of any opportunities, such as tourism, that 2012 brings.

6.2 The Aims of the Strategy

- To set out a common vision of Arts, Museums and Heritage services for North Hertfordshire
- To identify the ways in which Arts, Museums and Heritage services can help North Hertfordshire District Council achieve its strategic objectives
- To use the Strategy to help plan future Arts, Museums and Heritage provision
- To audit the existing provision across the District, to identify local needs
- To increase the amount of external funding for Arts, Museums and Heritage coming into North Hertfordshire by a significant amount, and to reduce the overall NHDC subsidy

6.3 Underlying Principles

6.3.1 The Local Strategic Partnership's vision for the District is:

'making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper'

and to work collaboratively with its partners and communities to achieve the vision. It has six strategic objectives

- Sustainable communities
- Safer communities
- Satisfied communities
- Healthier communities
- Equal communities
- Prosperous communities

6.3.2 This Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy contributes directly to the following objectives:

Promoting sustainable development of the district to ensure we deliver adequate affordable housing, protect the environment and conserve the heritage of our historic towns and rural areas

by its display and interpretation of collections relating to the local environment and heritage, particularly through the district's museums, with their local history, archaeology and natural history resources, and also through the NHDC Planning and Building Control Service

Ensuring that we listen to our citizens and deliver high-quality, value for money, customer-focussed services

The Fundamental Service Review of the Museum Service found that it had high-quality staff giving an extremely customer-focussed service, but was let down by its buildings, which gave poor value for money. The Strategy aims to find ways of providing more cost-effective services, with better quality buildings and more partnership working

Promoting first class leisure and cultural facilities to contribute to healthy living for all our citizens

The Strategy aims to promote first-class leisure and cultural facilities relating to the arts and/or museums and/or heritage in each of the major towns, and to find new ways of providing services for those in the District's villages

The Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy also relates to and complements the a number of Council plans and strategies, which are listed in Appendix 4.

7. Implementation

7.1 The Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy Action Plan

The North Hertfordshire District Council Arts, Museums & Heritage Strategy has identified six policy objectives that will be instrumental in guiding the continued development of arts, museums and heritage within the district. These objectives have been formulated as a result of public consultation, taking into account existing district, county, regional and national priorities.

- To increase the numbers of those participating in and enjoying the creative arts
- To increase the numbers of visitors to museums, galleries and heritage sites
- To improve facilities for experiencing, creating, housing and using the arts, museums and heritage
- To encourage partnership working within this sector
- To use arts, museums and heritage as a means for social inclusion
- To encourage tourism and regeneration in the district through the arts and heritage

See Action Plan, on following pages:

DRAFT Museums & Heritage Strategy Action Plan

Objective 1. To increase the numbers participating in and enjoying the creative arts				
Action	Lead organisation or partners	Outcomes	Timescales	Resources
Provide opportunities for children and young people to experience live theatre/poetry	LAC	Delivery of theatre performance to N. Herts. pupils by professional drama group Delivery of live poetry sessions for N. Herts. pupils <i>Strategic objective: Healthier communities</i>	2007/08 and on-going	The Princes' Trust (£17 per head per pupil)
Run successful Book Festival throughout the District	Festival Committee	More residents enjoy reading and creative writing; possible future tourism benefits <i>Strategic objective: Healthier communities</i>	March 2007 and annually	NHDC, LGCHF, Civic Trust, volunteer time
Provide arts activities for young people over 12, particularly in popular music	LAC	Through access to enjoyable high-quality learning, young people gain in skills and personal development <i>Strategic objective: Healthier communities</i>	2007/8	Arts Council England, PRS Foundation
Use visual arts to help families with literacy and numeracy, using the Plus Strategy	LAC	Through greater literacy and numeracy, families will become more confident, and be able to engage more actively with each other and in the community <i>Strategic objective: Equal communities</i>	2007/8	Arts Council England
To provide more artists' studios in the District	Various	North Herts. artists are more likely to remain within the District, giving social and economic benefits <i>Strategic objective: Prosperous communities</i>	2007/8 and on-going	WREN, private enterprise

DRAFT Arts, Museums & Heritage Action Plan

Objective 2. To increase the numbers of visitors to museums, galleries and heritage sites				
Action	Lead organisation or partners	Outcomes	Timescales	Resources
Publicise all North Herts museums with a widely-distributed joint leaflet.	NHDC	Museum visitors more aware of other North Herts. museums, so more likely to visit. Tourism benefits. <i>Strategic objective: Sustainable communities</i>	2007	NHDC, LGCHF and others
Develop and improve NHDC museum/gallery websites.	NHDC	Increase particularly in younger visitors, who use the internet as their main information source. <i>Strategic objective: Satisfied communities</i>	2007/8 and on-going	NHDC, grant-aid
Put joint leaflet on NHDC website, and also links to all N. Herts. arts/museums /heritage venues	NHDC	Greater awareness of variety of sites/activities on offer in the District. Tourism benefits. <i>Strategic objective: Satisfied communities</i>	2007	NHDC
Engage in national events such as Archaeology Day, Heritage Open Day in partnership	N. Herts. Museums Network	More residents and visitors understand and enjoy the heritage of North Herts. Tourism benefits <i>Strategic objective: Sustainable communities</i>	2007 and annually	NHDC, LGCHF, Civic Trust, volunteer time
Ensure that the NHDC museums each hold a high-quality (probably loaned) exhibition annually	NHDC	Increase in visitor numbers, increase in community awareness and pride in museums <i>Strategic objective: Satisfied communities</i>	On-going	NHDC; grant-aid

Objective 3. DRAFT To improve facilities for experiencing, housing and using the arts, museums and heritage				
Action	Lead organisation or partners	Outcomes	Timescales	Resources
Provide new storage facility for N. Herts. Museum Service, in partnership with other interested museums	NHDC	Museum objects correctly stored, with easy public access to these resources <i>Strategic objective: Sustainable communities; Healthier communities</i>	2008/9	NHDC, HLF, possibly LGCHF and others
Digitise the N. Herts. Museum Service collections	NHDC	Access to collections on-line for residents and visitors, enabling wider understanding of the heritage of North Herts. <i>Strategic objective: Satisfied communities</i>	2008 onwards	HLF and other grant-giving bodies
To determine longer-term arrangements for Baldock Museum	Baldock Museum & Local History Society	Secure future for Baldock Museum, with better display and storage facilities <i>Strategic objective: Satisfied communities</i>	To be decided	Grants
To determine longer-term arrangements for Royston & District Museum	Royston Town Council	Improved arrangements for Royston & District Museum <i>Strategic objective: Satisfied communities</i>	To be decided	Royston Town Council, grants
Provide temporary or permanent museum displays in village halls/community centres throughout the District	NHDC	Residents in rural areas gain a wider understanding of their heritage and environment, and benefit from the staff expertise and collections of NHDC Museums Service <i>Strategic objective: Sustainable communities</i>	2007/8	NHDC, HLF and other funds
Provide accessible museum facility in Letchworth to tell the story of the Garden City from prehistory to present	FGCHF	First-class museum in world's first Garden City. NHDC and LGCHF Letchworth collections all displayed under one roof, giving easier access for residents and tourists <i>Strategic objective: Satisfied communities</i>	To be decided	LGCHF
Provide accessible museum facility to display NHDC Hitchin collections, plus other NHDC non-Letchworth material	NHDC	High-quality museum and gallery displaying Hitchin-specific collections, district archaeology, natural history, social history, local history, art and temporary exhibitions, ensuring that the NHDC collections are more accessible for all residents and visitors. <i>Strategic objective: Healthy communities</i>	2011	NHDC, HLF, other museum-specific grant-giving bodies

Objective 4. DRAFT				
To encourage partnership working within this sector				
Action	Lead organisation or partners	Outcomes	Timescales	Resources
To set up the North Herts. Museums Network	NHDC	Regular meetings will enable museums to plan joint projects and publicity, making best use of resources <i>Strategic objective: Satisfied communities</i>	End Jan. 2007 and onwards	NHDC
NHDC Museum Service to continue to give curatorial advice/loans to other museums in the District	NHDC	Smaller museums can benefit from access to expertise of NHDC staff if requested, and from museum loan items, enabling greater professionalism at a local level <i>Strategic objective: Sustainable communities</i>	On-going	NHDC
To develop NHDC Museum Loans Service to include items from all museums in the District	NHDC in partnership with other NH museums	Schools and other community facilities will gain greater access to items from all North Herts. museums. Raised awareness of the individual museums through the use of branded Loan Boxes. <i>Strategic objective: Satisfied communities</i>	2008/9 and onwards	HLF, Esmee Fairburn Foundation
Acquire N. Herts Museums Service van	NHDC	Officers enabled to deliver loan items to other N. Herts. museums; outreach programmes to rural areas; Loan Boxes throughout District <i>Strategic objective: Satisfied communities</i>	2007	NHDC
NHDC Archaeology Officer to spend more time on outreach work with village local history groups	NHDC	Rural communities benefit from expertise and resources of N. Herts. Museum Service <i>Strategic objective: Satisfied communities</i>	2007 onwards	NHDC
Joint marketing of Heritage Open Day events through the District	NHDC with other museums, LGCHF, historic buildings	Greater awareness of the District's heritage <i>Strategic objective: Sustainable communities</i>	2007 onwards	Civic Trust, English Heritage

DRAFT Arts, Museums & Heritage Action Plan

Objective 5. To use arts, museums and heritage as a means for social inclusion				
Action	Lead organisation or partners	Outcomes	Timescales	Resources
Work with N Herts. Minority Ethnic Forum and Ravidassia Centre to increase awareness of arts and museums by BME groups	NHDC	Increased use of NHDC museums by BME groups <i>Strategic objective: Equal communities</i>	On-going	NHDC
NHDC to provide a fully-accessible museum and gallery, with public WCs and lecture/education room	NHDC	Greater use of museum/gallery by disabled people (both individually and in groups), elderly people, mothers with pushchairs, school parties <i>Strategic objective: Equal communities</i>	2011	NHDC, HLF and others
Support 'free' community festivals such as Rhythms of the World	NHDC	Free community events accessible to all lead to greater social inclusion, and can help promote cross-cultural understanding <i>Strategic objective: Equal communities</i>	On-going	NHDC and in-kind support
To provide outreach arts activities for 'hard to reach' young people	LAC	Young people helped to develop into confident adults <i>Strategic objective: Equal communities</i>	2008	Arts Council England or similar
Identify opportunities for BME residents to engage with the arts	LAC, University of Hertfordshire	A greater understanding of how the North Herts. BME communities can engage with the arts will help to plan future provision <i>Strategic objective: Equal communities</i>	2007/08	Awards for All

DRAFT Arts, Museums & Heritage Action Plan

Objective 6. To encourage tourism and regeneration in the District through the arts and heritage				
Action	Lead organisation or partners	Outcomes	Timescales	Resources
Supply TICs and libraries with the new joint museums leaflet	NHDC	Greater awareness of North Herts. museums, so tourists more likely to visit. <i>Strategic objective: Satisfied communities</i>	2007	NHDC, LGCHF and others
Ensure internet links to joint museums leaflet on NHDC and Herts Direct websites	NHDC	Greater awareness of North Herts. museums both locally and nationally <i>Strategic objective: Satisfied communities</i>	2007	NHDC
Ensure that Town Centre Managers are briefed on arts/museums/heritage events and venues, and work in partnership	NHDC, LGCHF, Town Centre Initiative, Chambers of Commerce, Town Councils	Greater buy-in from Town Centre partners, leading to more awareness, better events and increased tourism. <i>Strategic objective: Sustainable communities</i>	2007 and ongoing	Various
Ensure any new museums are high-quality 'flagship projects', in visible town-centre sites	NHDC LGCHF	First-class museums act as tourist magnets. The re-use of historic buildings for arts and museums venues regenerates these buildings, setting a quality benchmark for the surrounding environment. <i>Strategic objective: Healthier communities</i>	?2008 - 2011	NHDC, LGCHF, HLF and others
Support local organisations with publicity for unique heritage sites such as Royston Cave, and the archaeology and natural history of the Icknield Way	NHDC	Greater awareness of the heritage of North Herts., so tourists more likely to visit. <i>Strategic objective: Sustainable communities</i>	On-going	NHDC in-kind

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

We need to know that any changes made as a result of this strategy benefit the residents of the district. In order to do this, we will monitor and evaluate where possible.

Performance Indicators

In some NHDC services there are already government Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) which we will continue to use to monitor our performance – examples are the Museum Service PIs, which show the number of visitors, usage of the museums, and number of school groups which visit Hitchin and Letchworth Museums.

All seven museums in North Hertfordshire contribute to an annual Benchmarking scheme run by the County Museum Development Officer, and this will continue to be used to evaluate performance.

For those groups with a Service Level Agreement with the Council, there is already an agreed process of monitoring.

The amount of grant-aid coming in to the district will be used as an indicator.

9. Abbreviations and Glossary of Terms

9.1 Abbreviations:

ACE	Arts Council England
AV	Area Visioning
BVPI or PI	Best Value Performance Indicator
EH	English Heritage
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
LAC	Letchworth Art Centre
LGCHF	Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
MLA	Museums, Libraries & Archives Council

9.2 Glossary:

[To come]

10. Appendices: [To be completed]

Appendix 1

Membership of the Project Board

Members:

Cllr. Paul Clark, Cllr. Tricia Gibbs, Cllr. G. Grindall, Cllr. T. Hone, Cllr. I. Knighton

NHDC Officers:

R. Allwood, P. Candler, L. Hunter (minutes), J. Robinson, L. Saville

County:

A. Hawkins

Appendix 2**Membership of AMH Strategy Working Group**

Ros Allwood, Jane Arnold, Patrick Candler, Ellie Clarke, Scilla Douglas
 Cllr. Julian Cunningham, Keith Fitzpatrick-Mathews, Cllr. Tricia Gibbs
 Mary Goldsmith, Roger Hawkins, Muriel Hardman, Fiona Haines
 Cllr. Terry Hone, David Hodges, Alan Howard, David Howlett
 Lorrae Hunter (minutes), Maria Iredale, Mick James, Trevor James
 John Jarvis, Peter Ketteringham, Brendon King, Bob Mardon
 Cllr. Lynda Needham, Paul Palmer, Cllr. Michael Patterson, William Prime
 Terry Ransome, David Rice, Cllr. Robert Smith, Dorcas Sanders, Jillian
 Steyne, Juliet Stockford, Alison Tebbitt, Kate Thompson, John Webb

Appendix 3**Government Strategies consulted during the production of this document:****Arts:**

Arts Council England, Annual Review 2006 (Arts Council England, 2006)
Agenda for the Arts in the East of England 2006-8 (Arts Council England, 2006)

Museums:

Investing in Knowledge: A five year vision for England's museums, libraries and archives (MLA, 2004)
Understanding the Future: Museums and 21st Century Life (DCMS, 2005)
Museums for the Future: A development strategy for Museums in the East of England (MLA East of England, 2006)
Broadening Participation: A Summary of the East of England Museum Hub Plan 2006-8 (Renaissance East of England, 2006)

Heritage:

The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future (DCMS, 2001)
Heritage Counts: The State of the East of England's Historic Environment, 2006 (English Heritage, 2006)

General:

Values and Vision: The Contribution of Culture (Arts Council, MLA and others, 2005)

Appendix 4**NHDC Strategies consulted during the production of this document:**

Leisure & Cultural Strategy 2001-2005 This aims to encourage participation in the arts, and to preserve and interpret the heritage of the past. It is now in need of updating, and the AMH Strategy will be incorporated in any new Cultural Strategy

Community Strategy (update 2004) This aims to improve the quality of life for all local people. It uses information gained from the 'Area Visioning' processes, by which NHDC consults with communities.

Town Centre Strategies – Hitchin (2004), Baldock (2006), Letchworth (draft 2006)

Social Inclusion Strategy 2005-2008 This encourages community development, to offer opportunities as widely as possible, in order to improve the quality of life for all our citizens.

North Herts. District Local Plan No.2 This plan outlines the planning guidelines for the district, and describes the rich historic environment of North Hertfordshire.

Play Strategy 2006-9 This sets out the priorities and identifies the significance of play in North Hertfordshire. Learning through play is an aim of the arts and in the Council museums, in their popular Under-5s sessions.

Appendix 5.

Inventory of Arts, Museums & Heritage Provision in North Herts.

[NB. The Inventory is currently very brief, and does not include details of the majority of the many arts, craft and heritage societies/venues in the District, or performance venues. NHDC is currently auditing these facilities, and will incorporate the results in the final document. Please let us know if you would like a copy of the Audit sheet for your organisation.]

The major arts venues:

Benslow Music Trust

Benslow Music Trust is an international music school in Hitchin. The Trust runs residential music courses and also host regular concerts, which are open to the public to attend. The Music School boasts a superb concert hall, built in 2000 and funded by the National Lottery.

Benslow estimate that they have an annual footfall of 4,000 and run 125 residential courses and 10 public concerts per year.

Benslow Music Trust receives financial assistance from NHDC distributed by the Arts Council for North Hertfordshire. The amount varies from year to year but was £2,000 in 2006/07.

The Queen Mother Theatre

The Queen Mother Theatre is based in Hitchin and is run by volunteers. The Bancroft Players own and manage the theatre, which has charitable status and is non-profit making. It runs a busy and popular programme, and is financially self-sustaining.

The Queen Mother Theatre has three main purposes; it is a producing theatre, it hosts professional performances and it is available for hire by community groups at low rates. It anticipates hosting 50-60 performances per Two youth

theatre groups use the theatre, with members ranging in age from 10 – 18 years. The theatre has a seating capacity of 170.

In the past that the Queen Mother Theatre has received some financial assistance from NHDC, distributed by the Arts Council for North Hertfordshire, to support under-subscribed professional events.

Letchworth Art Centre (formerly The Place)

Letchworth Art Centre is North Hertfordshire's Arts Centre, based in Letchworth. Founded and run mainly by volunteers, LAC has a diverse programme of art exhibitions, art classes, music concerts and theatre. In 2006/7 NHDC and Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation committed a total of £30,000 (£15,000 each) which has allowed employment of a development director. It is hoped that this initiative will broaden the appeal of the facility and encourage more outreach work to take place in North Herts., as well as helping LAC to become increasingly self sustainable. LGCHF has contributed towards staffing costs, plus free rent, and plus approx. £500,000 renovation costs. These have included a new entrance, and a lift. There is also a new post of LAC Operations Manager. NHDC is supporting The Place on the basis that it has aspirations to deliver a range of arts service on an outreach basis – as opposed to supplying artistic services at one site.

North Hertfordshire College

North Hertfordshire College has sites in Hitchin, Letchworth and Stevenage, with a range of venues that can be used for a range of artistic and cultural purposes.

The performing arts department actions approximately 25 shows a year, varying in size from large events played over three nights to small one –off shows. The College does not currently record attendance, but has estimated that there are 2500 audience members per year. The Michael Brown Gallery at the Centre for the Arts in Hitchin has a display area for work by its students and alumni.

Plinston Hall – Letchworth (owned by Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation)

The Plinston Hall's remit, as part of the objectives of the Letchworth Heritage Foundation, is to benefit the local Letchworth community with the provision of recreation and leisure facilities in the interests of social welfare to improve the quality of life. The Hall provides four function spaces, three bars and on-site catering facilities for public events and private hire available 360 days of the year. Twenty clubs and societies meet weekly at the Hall. The Gardens Gallery upstairs at Plinston Hall is occasionally used for art exhibitions.

During the year a broad range of activities take place including music concerts, ballroom and tea dances, business conferences, discos, play-scheme activities, private parties and social events, collectors' fairs, film, theatre and variety shows. Annual footfall is over 100,000 although many of these will be repeat visits.

The Settlement – Letchworth

The Letchworth Settlement is a primarily self-funding charity that is also supported by the District Council (approx £400 per year) and the Letchworth

Garden City Heritage Foundation. It hosts a range of classes, performances, lectures and community work, many of which fall under the arts and heritage headings. It has a staged theatre seating 120, and its overall capacity is around 218. The ground floor is suitable for wheelchair users, for which it hosts 'linking together', a group run for wheelchair users. Other classes range from modern Greek to upholstery to University of Cambridge adult education courses. It acts as a venue for local clubs such as the Letchworth Camera Club, the Guild of Weavers and Spinners, the Letchworth Art Society, and associated organisations such as the RSPB. Its annual footfall is estimated to be 42,000 although many of these will be repeat visits

Multi-cultural venues

The Ravidassia Centre

The Ravidassia Centre is a multi-cultural centre serving the needs and interests of the ethnic minorities in the district. The centre has a range of community activities, a number of which come under the arts/heritage head. The centre stages multi-cultural awareness events such as Black History Month and Passover for a variety of faiths and cultures, and has worked in partnership with Hitchin Museum. The main hall holds 125 people and approximately 22 events are held per annum. In 2004 2,070 visitors visited the centre.

North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum

The NHMEF acts as a conduit for ethnic minority interests and is a venue for multi-cultural events. With an annual footfall of over 10,000 the forum welcomes minority groups from all sections of the community including the Indian sub-continent, Afro-Caribbean, Chinese and European visitors. The centre has recently moved to new premises, which can hold up to 200 – 250 people at any one time within its main hall and associated rooms. It facilitates or delivers a range of services including information and advice; language, dance and IT classes as well as providing an interpreting and translating service.

Annual arts events

Rhythms of the World

Rhythms of the World is an annual world music festival that takes place in Hitchin. Boasted as Europe's largest free world music festival, thousands of people flock from far and wide to experience a diverse range of music and entertainment for two days every July. Estimated footfall stands at 35,000.

Now in its 13th year, the festival has gone from strength to strength and has tremendous support from the communities of Hitchin. The festival is run entirely by volunteers who donate their time throughout the year to plan and run a successful festival.

North Hertfordshire District Council support Rhythms of the World both financially (approx. £10,000 pa) and in-kind.

Hitchin Festival

The Rhythms of the World event originally was born out of the Hitchin Festival, a 16 day annual event held every July. The festival reflects the interests, diversity and skills of the Hitchin community and beyond. The

programme includes guided walks, lectures, concerts, poetry, jazz, art exhibitions and a gardeners' question time, and makes use of public and commercial facilities all over the town centre. Normally the Hitchin Committee gives around £2000 to this event. Many events are free and ticketed events are often sold on the door so there is no footfall data available.

Broadway Gardens Events

In June 2003 the newly refurbished Broadway Gardens were publicly opened with a staged event. This event has since been repeated annually. In 2004 there was a range of musical entertainment from a 'classical hour' through to the tribute band 'Kings of Queen'. During 2005 a predominantly youth music event was run in partnership with a local charity. NHDC funded the 2003 and 2004 event (with LGCHF assistance in 2004), with the 2005 and 2006 events grant-aided equally by both NHDC and the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, at a total cost of £25,000. It is hoped that there will be more events in this area, organised by local organisations as well as NHDC and LGCHF.

Baldock Festival

The Baldock festival is a fortnight-long event, now in its 23rd year. Running in early May, it makes use of the support and sponsorship of local groups and commercial interests as well as the support of NHDC (£1060 in 2006/7) Spread throughout the town, the festival consists of a wide range of activities including concerts, treasure hunts, competitions, petanque, golf, auctions, drama, local history events and art exhibitions. It climaxes with a historically-themed Street Fair which is sited on the High Street's market place, with fairground rides, Morris dancing, craft stalls, historical re-enactors, and a first aid point. Baldock Museum always runs a special exhibition looking at an aspect of the town's history; in 2006 the NHDC Archaeology Officer also gave free object identification sessions for the public in the museum. Over 5,000 visitors are expected annually.

Royston Kite Festival

This is an annual event, held early summer, attracting around 1000 visitors. Kite enthusiasts attend from all over the country. In 2006/07 NHDC gave £750.

Orchestral Music Concert

For many years there has been an annual orchestral concert in Baldock; the result of an ongoing partnership between Knights Templar School in Baldock and North Hertfordshire District Council. The school has welcomed nationally acclaimed orchestras including The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, The Academy of Saint Martin-in-the-Fields and the English Sinfonia. The concert is funded through an NHDC subscription to the Eastern Orchestral Board of approximately £5000pa. An education programme for local schools is run alongside the orchestral concert.

Resources for the arts:

The Arts Council for North Hertfordshire

The Arts Council for North Hertfordshire was established in the 1960's with the aim of providing financial support and assistance to local groups for the arts and arts related activities. The sole source of funding for the Arts Council for North Hertfordshire comes from North Hertfordshire District Council. The ACNH is granted £13,200 per annum to cover the ACNH running expenses and to distribute to arts groups in the District to promote arts activities. On a yearly basis the Arts Council for North Hertfordshire supports over 35 voluntary arts groups in the District for a wide variety of different activities.

Arts Council, England

Arts Council England provides resources to individuals and organisations in North Hertfordshire through Arts Council East. Over the last three years it has provided an individual dance artist in Hitchin with £48,086 and another in Baldock with £6299. It has provided two visual artists in Hitchin with £31,329, and given Rhythms of the World £5000. In Royston, music project 'Ten Second Window' received £4975 this year.

Art, craft and photography societies: (to be completed)

Hitchin Art Club

Letchworth Art Society

Music and choral societies: (to be completed)

Dance and Performance groups: (to be completed)

Museums

Ashwell Museum

At 75, Ashwell Museum is one of the oldest village museums in the country. It is an independent volunteer museum, run by a charitable trust, and housed in a 16th century timber building in the centre of Ashwell. It has attractive displays on all aspects of village life, particularly those relating to Ashwell. Ashwell Museum receives curatorial advice from NHDC through the MLA Curatorial Adviser scheme. It is a Registered Museum, open on Sunday and Bank Holiday afternoons.

Baldock Museum

Baldock Museum is run by the Baldock Museum and Local History Society, and is a registered charity. It is currently housed in two rooms in Baldock Town Hall, but its future in this building is uncertain, as the Town Hall may be redeveloped. Run by volunteers, the museum has permanent displays of Baldock's history from the Roman period to the present, and an annual changing display on a separate local topic. Under 10% of its collection is currently displayed. The NHDC Archaeology Officer helps Baldock Museum with displays and advice. Open Wednesday and Sunday afternoons, it received 510 visitors in 2005.

Hitchin Museum

Hitchin Museum opened in 1941, in the top floor of a house built in 1825 for John Kershaw, who ran a Hitchin to London coach service. Since 1966 the museum has occupied the whole of the building, which is run by NHDC. The ground floor houses a reception area and shop, two temporary exhibition galleries, local and social history displays, and the Herts. Yeomanry Gallery. Upstairs is a costume gallery, Messrs. Perks & Llewellyn's chemist shop and a small room for researchers. The costume collection is the largest in Hertfordshire, containing around 4000 items. The pharmacy collection, also large, is owned by the Hertfordshire Medical & Pharmaceutical Museum Trust, which also maintains an attractive Physic Garden on a former lawn outside the museum. Less than 10% Hitchin Museum's collections are on display at any one time. The museum has no public lavatory, which increasingly is seen as a problem by potential school groups, and has led to cancelled bookings. It is a Registered Museum open 5 days a week (closed Wed. and Sun.) and in 2005 received 22159 visitors.

Hitchin British Schools Museum

The British Schools Museum tells the story of elementary education in Britain from 1810 until 1969. Run by a charitable trust, it is staffed almost entirely by volunteers. The museum is set in a unique set of buildings, with the only remaining Lancasterian Schoolroom in the world, built to Joseph Lancaster's specifications, allowing one master to teach 330 boys in one schoolroom. There is also a rare 1853 Galleried Classroom, and a large Girls' and Infants' School, built in 1857. This houses a Meeting Room, Museum of Victorian life, tea room and a gift shop. There is also a restored Victorian Headmaster's house, and Edwardian Classrooms, which feature displays of desks and teaching artefacts from 1905 to 1969. The British Schools Museum is the home of the Jill Grey Collection of 35,000 items relating to early education and childhood, and to the Benchmark Collection, which consists of similar items added since 1987. In addition to general and specialist visitors, the museum receives many school parties. It works in partnership with Hitchin Museum on Tuesdays, offering Victorian schoolday and World War II evacuee experiences to school groups who visit both museums. It is a Registered Museum, open Tuesdays (Feb. – Nov), Saturdays and Sunday afternoons from April to October. The site is currently too cold to open in winter. It receives around 10,000 visitors pa.

First Garden City Heritage Museum, Letchworth Garden City

Letchworth is the world's first Garden City, and the First Garden City Heritage Museum tells the story of the Garden City Movement from its origins to the present day. It is housed in an attractive but small Arts & Crafts building designed in 1907 by the architect Barry Parker. Originally administered by NHDC, it is now an independent museum run by the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, with permanent displays and temporary exhibitions reflecting Letchworth's unique history. The museum attracts visitors and students of town-planning from all over the world. There are plans to move to far larger and more accessible premises in Letchworth Town Hall, where more

of the collection would be on show. The museum is open daily, closed Sundays. In 2004/5 there were 4262 visitors.

Letchworth Museum & Art Gallery

Founded as a one-storey building by the Letchworth Naturalists Society in 1914, Letchworth Museum has received a number of additions over the years. Letchworth Museum is run by NHDC, and has collections of natural history, archaeology, fine and applied art, costume and social history. The ground floor at Letchworth Museum has a shop and reception area, and an attractive natural history gallery. Halfway up the stairs is a small Mezzanine Gallery, used for exhibitions and for children's workshops. Upstairs is the main art gallery, used for a wide range of temporary exhibitions, and a large archaeology gallery, with very good Iron Age and Roman material, showing the history of the area up to the founding of the Garden City. The art collection, most of which is currently in store, includes a large number of works by William Ratcliffe (1870-1955), a well-known member of the early 20th century Camden Town Group. The museum also has good collections of general social history, applied art (particularly ceramics), costume and costume accessories. Through lack of display space, these collections are also normally in store, and only used in temporary displays and exhibitions. Letchworth Museum adjoins the Public Library, and when possible borrows its upstairs gallery for school and other groups. Letchworth Museum & Art Gallery has twice received national security clearance to display works from national museums such as the Tate Gallery. It is a Registered Museum open 5 days a week (closed Wed. and Sun.), and received 17,664 visitors in 2005.

Royston & District Museum

A museum was first established in Royston in 1856, but closed in 1901, and the collection dispersed. In 1965 the Royston and District Local History Society was formed with the main aim of providing a museum for the town, which opened in a room in the Town Hall in 1976. In 1984 Royston & District Museum moved to its present building, a Victorian Congregational Church Schoolroom. It is administered by Royston Town Council, with trustees nominated by the Local History Society and elected Councillors. A team of volunteers assist the Curator and Assistant Curator. The collection on display documents Royston's history, and also includes a superb display of ceramics and glass from the later part of the nineteenth century to the present day, lent by a private collector. Royston & District Museum also holds an extensive photographic, newspaper, and document collection, costumes/textiles, and an art collection which includes major holdings of paintings and etchings by E Herbert Whydale. Royston & District Museum receives curatorial advice from NHDC through the MLA Curatorial Adviser scheme. It is a Registered Museum, open Weds., Thurs. Sats, plus Sunday afternoons during the summer. The museum has an active Friends group. It received 4326 visitors in 2004/5.

Local History Societies (to be completed, and other groups added)

Hitchin Historical Society

Hitchin Society

Letchworth Garden City Society

Baldock Society

North Herts. Archaeology Society

In contrast to the town and village history groups, the North Herts. Archaeology Society is interested in the District as a whole. Founded in 1960 it holds a regular programme of lectures at Letchworth Museum, and for many years volunteer members have undertaken archaeological digs around North Herts. From 2003 – 2005 members worked in partnership with professional archaeologists from Heritage Network, excavating a Romano-British site near Baldock, which has now been identified as a shrine to a newly-discovered Romano-British goddess, Senuna. The Society is also involved in a community archaeology project in Norton Village, in partnership with Letchworth Museum and the Garden City Heritage Museum. The Society has 120 members, 8 committee members, and 3-4 regular volunteers.

Quotes to be inserted through the Strategy (more to come):
What you told us:

Think of young families and what is important to them

Think of a string of pearls – the North Herts towns set along the ancient Icknield Way

On housing the NHDC Letchworth-specific collections and LGCHF collections together in one building

‘The sensible Letchworth solution..with all the advantage of synergy’

On Hitchin Museum

Expand the present Museum (and Gallery) into the Library building and re-house the Library

It is imperative the Hitchin items stay in Hitchin

On IT

We need to think ahead. We should use technology to its full extent to bring things to life

On heritage/countryside

The common ground under North Herts should be celebrated

I want to see more natural environment. [A museum] should be completely holistic, with an element of countryside – bio-diversity, public health, environmental records

On heritage

I think we need to link archaeology with other things e.g. listed buildings. We want to protect our historic heritage.

‘The historic environment can help to create an immediate sense of pride in an area, a shared sense of belonging, and assist people to identify with the place they live and with their neighbours.’

Heritage Counts. The state of the East of England's Historic Environment 2006. English Heritage

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

10

TITLE OF REPORT: AREA GOVERNANCE & COSTS OF DEMOCRACY

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & CULTURAL SERVICES

Attached is the report that was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 19 December 2006.

The Area Committees, Scrutiny and Performance, Audit and Review Committee have been invited to comment on the report before it is re-considered by Cabinet. Members' views are invited.

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TITLE OF REPORT: AREA GOVERNANCE AND THE COST OF DEMOCRACY BUDGET SAVINGS 2006/07

JOINT REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES, HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL AND HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS: COUNCILLOR TRICIA GIBBS
COUNCILLOR ANDREW YOUNG
COUNCILLOR RICHARD THAKE

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out a series of proposals and options to determine savings which may be made if the Council's approach to its governance and decision making arrangements is restructured.
- 1.2 The aim is to achieve the target of £50,000 under the heading 'costs of democracy' that was agreed as part of the Service and Financial Planning process for 2006/7.
- 1.3 Cabinet is asked to consider and consult on the savings proposals and options prior to making any consequent recommendations to Council on the constitutional change necessary to effect their implementation.
- 1.4 The report is predicated on the need to streamline the decision making processes and procedures of the Council and, in so doing, reduce by a commensurate level the 'bureaucracy' of administration, management and other officer support that the current structures and practices generate. While this is intended to improve efficiency, it will also mean a change in the way the Council works.
- 1.5 For the purpose of this report, the 'costs of democracy' are defined by the following CIPFA budget headings:

Costs of Democracy is a corporate cost centre held within the Chief Executive's Directorate which covers the direct costs and recharges from across the authority to fund the costs of supporting the democratic process. These activities include Member Services, officers time in preparing for and attending meetings, pre-meetings, political briefings, technical and professional advice, corporate management time, Chairman's functions, Member training, allowances etc.
- 1.6 This report also aims to respond to the outstanding issues on Area Governance that were originally identified by the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group in May 2005 and which were considered by Cabinet at its meeting in June 2006.
- 1.7 Any decisions that are taken at this stage need to be mindful of the thinking that is currently contained within the Lyons Review of Local Government, the LGA Paper Closer to People, the Local Government White Paper and the Barker Review.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was referred to in the Forward Plan of 1st May 2006.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At its meeting on 27th June 2006, Cabinet resolved:

To agree that officers undertake further detailed work to review the options in paragraph 4.6 on the area governance and decision making arrangements of the Council in order to meet the future savings requirements of the Service and Financial Planning process.

And

That a further report on proposals for new arrangements will be submitted to Cabinet in October 2006.

- 3.2 Paragraph 4.6 stated:

'However, it is also evident that these savings cannot be found unless there is a more thorough and systematic review of the overall decision making processes of the Council, which include the following:

- Cabinet and delegated decision making to Portfolio Holders, Area Committees and Officers;
- Operational arrangements for PARC/Scrutiny functions;
- Cost effectiveness and consistency of planning determination at Area Committees;
- Enhancing capacity of community leadership by Area Committees;
- Changing the functions of Area Committees;
- Reducing the number and frequency of meetings;
- Reducing the number and frequency of ancillary meetings, sub-groups, etc';

- 3.3 This report sets out a series of proposals and options with associated costings that aim not only to meet the required savings but also to offer additional for 2007/8.

4. KEY PROPOSALS

- 4.1 In view of the overall budget size and the desire to reduce 'bureaucracy' and meet efficiency targets, a strategic approach to finding savings has been adopted through the Financial Strategy. It is considered that a change in the system of decision making across the authority which entails a reduction in the number of meetings and, crucially, a commensurate reduction of work load and officer time in administering and supporting these, will both enable the authority to make the savings and maintain a sustainable position in ensuring transparent, accountable decision making.

- 4.2 The proposals for savings set out in this report have been considered in the framework of the Council's corporate objectives, the further development of devolved decision making, the drive to improve the community engagement aspects of the democratic

process, the need to improve planning performance and to deliver on the enhanced role of community leadership which has developed since the implementation of the Local Government Act 2000 and the duty contained therein to develop a community strategy and the power to act for the improvement of the well-being of the district. Options recommended may impact on the constitutional framework and how decision making is exercised, with potential changes to consultation feedback, increased use of officer decision making and portfolio holder consultation.

4.3 **Frequency and Operation of Key Meetings**

Council Meetings

The Council currently meets at a frequency of 9 times per year, with special meetings in addition. The Constitution states that there will be at least 7 timetabled meetings per annum. The proposal is that the frequency could be reduced to 6 times a year with minimal impact on the range of decisions that Council has to make.

Cabinet and Portfolio Holders

It is recognised that Cabinet increasingly has a significant amount of work in which it is involved, at least in terms of the range and length of reports on which it is asked simply to note.

Cabinet presently meets 11 times per year with special meetings in addition. It is proposed that this number could reduce to 6 times per year. A schedule linking to each Council meeting would be established.

By themselves, the reduction of meetings will only contribute marginally to the savings required. Greater savings are feasible if there was to be a change in the way that the decision making that is currently made by Cabinet sitting as a committee would be made instead by individual Portfolio Holders or officers.

It is therefore proposed that a review of the decisions made at Cabinet which could be delegated to Portfolio Holders is undertaken. However, if these were key decisions, they would still require input from Committee Services and would be referenced on the Forward Plan and involve public notification, recording and publication.

It is further proposed that many of the reports currently submitted to Cabinet should be sent out as information items in M.I.S. An increased use of MIS through electronic means would ensure greater member awareness of decisions made.

PARC/Scrutiny

Consideration was given to combining the PARC and Scrutiny Committees, but it is proposed that PARC and Scrutiny should be retained as the most appropriate way in which the performance, review and scrutiny functions can be delivered for the Council.

However, a review of the Terms of Reference for each committee should be undertaken to define more precisely the respective areas of work, so as to avoid any duplication or confusion. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups should be limited to two in any one year.

A reduction for each Committee to meet six times per year would help achieve some savings, reflecting the similar reductions to Council and Cabinet.

4.4 **Savings and Implications**

The combined savings made from a reduction of Council, Cabinet, PARC and Scrutiny meetings with consequent increased decision making by Portfolio Holders are set out in paragraph 4.11.

4.5 **Central Development Control Committee**

It is proposed that the area based decision making (ABDM) of Area Committees meeting on a minimum of 45 occasions a year should be replaced by a single central Development Control Committee that would meet for a minimum of 12 occasions a year.

A central Development Control Committee would consist of 15 members, drawn from a wider pool of Councillors representing, each of the five Area Committees. In this way, each area would be directly represented. Cabinet Members would be excluded from this Committee, but it would have to be politically balanced. The current equation used to determine committee membership would suggest 10 Conservatives, 3 Labour and 2 Liberal Democrats.

In determining the role of planning in Area Committees versus a single Development Control Committee, consideration needs to be given to the efficiency and effectiveness of the current arrangement of the five Area Committees working separately in their localities in comparison to having one central Committee that deals with all planning matters for the entire district.

The key drivers to improving planning arrangements are:

1. The speed and efficiency of decision making – BVPI 109 sets a requirement upon the Authority to determine applications within certain time scales.
2. Consistency of decision making.
3. Ability for Members to act as ward representatives (advocates) versus quasi-judicial makers.

1. Speed of Decision Making

The Government's targets for dealing with planning applications means that for major applications 60% of those have to be dealt with within 13 weeks, for minor applications it is 65% within 8 weeks and for other (householder) applications 80% within 8 weeks.

The current arrangements of 45 Area Committees per year mean that in many instances it is 5 to 6 weeks between an Area Committee meeting for any one particular area. Given the current cycle of Area Committee meetings, it is increasingly difficult for applications to be dealt with within the prescribed periods, taking into account:

1. Member call-in arrangements
2. Consultation with statutory bodies
3. Administration of applications

In respect of item 1, Member call-in arrangements have been revised and the call-in period has been reduced from 28 days to 21 days.

For item 2, there is no scope for amending the time period within which statutory consultees can respond. However, the Member call-in period and the consultation for statutory consultees is now in accordance. At present a maximum of 10% of applications which go to committee are determined within the statutory time scales although overall we are achieving our BVPI 109 target. The main factor with the 'poorer' performance of applications that go to Area Committees is the time-cycle of Area Committee meetings. In comparison with authorities across Hertfordshire, and in particular those who have good performance levels, the majority have planning committees which meet with a frequency of between 3 and 4 weeks, but these are centralised and not area.

With regard to item 3, there is a constant improvement in the way that we process planning applications and booking in and handling of applications normally now occurs within 3 days of receipt. This element of service delivery will continue to be kept under review by the Head of Service.

2. Consistency in Decision Making

At present, the five Area Committees act in a quasi-judicial regulatory manner to determine planning applications across the district. It is essential that there is consistency of sound planning advice provided to Members of the various area committees for the handling of applications in order to ensure proper decisions are made. In the past there have been instances where decisions in one area of the district have not been consistent with other areas. This becomes problematic in an appeal situation where appellants can use such different interpretation of policy to seek to justify proposals that the Council does not wish to support. While the Council's appeals record is good, it could be improved further through more consistency in decision making that can be better achieved through a central Development Control Committee.

3. Advocate Versus Decision Maker

In the current system, all Members of the Council are decision makers in respect of planning matters. This can lead to conflict between this regulatory role and the role of community advocate. In responding to any planning application, Members have clear guidance in the Planning Code of Practice, which is designed to assist them in having particular regard to issues of predetermination and perception of bias. This supplements the Code of Conduct.

These cannot avoid all potential threats of unlawfulness in the Council's planning functions but officers are of the view, supported by experience in other authorities, that the establishment of a central Development Control Committee would enable those Members who are not Members of the Development Control Committee to act as local advocates in a less restrictive manner, not being bound by the same constraints as if they were a decision maker. It should also be noted that a member cannot act as an advocate before the Development Control Committee if they have a prejudicial interest.

4.6 **Savings and Implications**

A move to have all planning applications determined by a central Development Control Committee would significantly reduce the level of Planning Officer time needed to service and advise the Committee.

For example, at present, Area Committee planning business time on average is 75 hours per year in the actual meetings, but this excludes officer travel, set up and take down times. Indeed, Planning Officers often attend for a full Area Committee meeting which takes up considerable more time. A central Committee meeting 12 times a year for an average of 3 hours concentrating solely on planning issues, could operate much more effectively.

Arising from this, it is proposed that there are officer related savings to be made that equate to £3,500 per year.

It is, however, recognised that there may well be further savings to be made in the way in which planning decisions are determined, eg: through collaborative working with Anite and subsequent changes in working practices. Further examination of the wider Planning and Development budgets are required that are outside the scope of this report.

4.7 **Changing Functions of Area Committees**

Each Area Committee meets at least 9 times per year and in addition to their regulatory function of planning and development control, they have the community leadership and engagement role in which they can establish closer links with the communities that they serve.

However, in the event that the development control function no longer lies with the Area Committees, there will not be the need for them to meet on so many occasions. Within the range of proposals presented in this report, it is suggested that the Area Committees only need to meet a maximum of 6 times a year, commensurate with the frequency of other Council Committees, except Development Control.

Without the regulatory function, and though they may meet less frequently, the Committees will, nevertheless, have greater scope for developing their scrutiny function and, principally, that of community leadership, well-being and engagement.

The development of such actions and approaches is well documented in the present discussions on the Lyons Review and the LGA 's Closer to People and Places – A New Vision for Local Government. There is also a strong focus on improved community leadership within the recently published Government White Paper.

Notwithstanding this 'direction of travel', there still remain significant savings to be made to reduce the costs of democracy and the main element of these will be through a rationalisation of the administrative and organisational officer support given to fewer Area Committees.

To this end, in the illustrative examples set out below, Option 1 proposes to reduce the number of Area Committees by combining the present five to become four, while Option 2 suggests a reduction of five committees to three.

Either way, if the principle of retaining fewer Area Committees is agreed, then further consideration can be given as to the detailed composition of each, especially in the light of changed ward boundaries.

Option 1

Committee	Member Composition	Comments
Royston and District	7	Retention of same Member numbers, reflecting existing balance between urban and rural wards.
Baldock and District	6	As above.
Letchworth and District (formerly part of S. Rural)	Letchworth 13 From SR eg: 5	18 Assumes new Member representation after Boundary Review and includes new Chesfield Ward.
Hitchin and District (formerly part of S.Rural)	Hitchin 13 From SR, eg: 5	18 Assumes new Member representation after Boundary Review.

Option 2

Committee	Member Composition	Comments
Royston, Baldock and District	Royston 7 Baldock 6	13 Amalgamation of Royston and Baldock and rural areas. Creates a more balanced area committee numerically, though covers a very big geographical area.
Letchworth and District	Letchworth 13 From SR, eg: 5	18 As in Option 1.
Hitchin and District	Hitchin 13 From SR, eg: 5	18 As in Option 1.

The Royston and Baldock Committees already have a structure that provides a balance between the local urban and rural areas, so a similar principle can be applied to Letchworth and Hitchin, helping to build stronger linkages between their urban areas and their neighbouring rural hinterland. By merging the rural wards nearest to the respective urban areas, the Southern Rural Area Committee would no longer exist.

While Option 1 reflects the existing Committees of Royston and Baldock with their own specific identities and issues, nevertheless, in terms of member representation, each Committee is less than half the composition of Letchworth and Hitchin. Option 2, therefore, suggests an amalgamation of Royston and Baldock to achieve a more equitable balance of Councillors in comparison to Letchworth and Hitchin.

The above options are only two illustrations of possible revised Area Committee combinations and there are other permutations that can be considered within the overall principle of reducing the number of Area Committees.

4.8 **Savings and Implications**

It is estimated that staff savings of £53,000 could be found through a reduction of management, administrative and development support given to the Area Committees.

However, it must be appreciated that with a reduced level of support, the remaining three or four Committees will not be resourced to the same level as they might have been in the past. Such support includes community development, member services and non-committee based planning work. There will have to be a change in expectations as to what can be delivered through a reduction in workload that reflects the capacity of a reduced workforce.

A detailed assessment of the service reductions required to match the staffing savings has still to be completed. Implicit in this approach is that there will need to be fewer items dealt with in the formal Council and Committee settings. Without a reduction in decisions being made, there is a danger that the length of meetings may increase or that additional meetings may be called, for which there would be no administrative support.

4.9 **Enhanced Community Leadership**

During 2006 there has been a number of government driven, national initiatives that have considered, amongst other things, the idea of community leadership within a changing relationship between central and local government.

For example, in May, the Lyons Inquiry on National Prosperity, Local Choice and Civic Engagement was published and there are several suggestions within this that echo the Council's established ambitions to engage more effectively with its local communities.

Also in May, the Local Government Association produced a report entitled 'Closer to People and Places – a new vision for local government', which asserts a bold and radical approach for the future of local government, and in particular develops the concepts of community leadership by local councillors.

The Government White Paper on new forms and functions for Local Government was published in October. Amongst the proposals are those to:

- offer a stronger role for local authorities to lead their communities, shape their areas and bring local public services together;
- enable Councillors to better act as advocates/champions for their communities;
- publish a revised statutory model Code of Conduct for Councillors, to allow Councillors to speak on licensing and planning issues;
- encourage Councils to provide Councillors with small budgets.

All three reports have been considered within the preparation of this report, but the Council will still need to review and determine its position in meeting the new challenges.

However, one practical outcome if the proposed changes to Committees were to be implemented is the reduction in time that Members, particularly back-benchers, would be spending attending meetings. To compensate for this loss of 'responsibility', alternative approaches to the work of councillors will need to be considered. As the White Paper suggests, there could be a new role for Members who will:

- Be the recognised champions for the area, identifying and helping to resolve local concerns;
- Act as community leaders who provide direction for their area, mediating between and helping to reconcile competing views and interests, encouraging and aiding people and communities to resolve local problems themselves;
- Foster effective relationships with public, private, voluntary and community organisations in their area.

Members will need new and different levels of support to enable them to be effective in this changed role. Officers, such as Community Development Officers, would be able to provide some of the professional support that might be needed. However, as noted in 4.7 above, while there may be differing expectations of Members in a new role, further consideration would need to be given to the more limited levels and type of support Members could be able to receive from a reduced workforce.

4.10 Summary of Key Changes

Option 1

Committee	Present Frequency of Meetings	Proposed Frequency of Meetings	Net increase/ Decrease	Savings
Council	9	6 (see note 1)	- 3	
Cabinet	11	6 (see note 2)	- 5	
PARC	9	6	- 3	
Scrutiny	10	6	- 4	
Area Committees	45 (9x5)	24 (6x4)	- 21	
Planning	0	12	+12	
Net Reduction	84*	60*	- 24	

Option 2

Committee	Present Frequency of Meetings	Proposed Frequency Of Meetings	Net increase/ Decrease	Savings
Council	9	6 (see note 1)	- 3	
Cabinet	11	6 (see note 2)	- 5	
PARC	9	6	- 3	

Scrutiny	10	6	- 4	
Area Committees	45 (9x5)	18 (6x3)	-27	
Planning	0	12	+12	
Net Reduction (2)	84*	54*	- 30	

Note 1 – this includes the budget meeting and Annual Council leaving four meetings for regular business

Note 2 – this includes the budget meeting leaving five meetings for key decisions

* To these totals should be added an approximate figure of 30, which represents other meetings that meet either less regularly or on an ad-hoc basis, eg: Highways Panel, Standards Committee, Licensing and Appeals Committee, Audit Sub-Committee.

4.11 Summary of Savings

The savings shown are cashable savings and it is anticipated that further non-cashable efficiency savings will be found as a result of the changed working practices, (e.g. Members may be aware that a number of planning officer posts are currently funded from Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) which expires in 2007/08). These will be identified in future year's service and financial planning process.

The main savings emerging from these proposals are:

Central Development Control Committee & 4 Area Committees:

Salary savings from rationalisation of Officer support to Cabinet, Council, PARC, Scrutiny, Area Committees, Planning, etc. £59,050

Reduction in general Committee Administration Costs £2,730

Total £61,780

Central Development Control Committee & 3 Area Committees

Salary savings from rationalisation of Officer support to Cabinet, Council, PARC, Scrutiny, Area Committees, Planning, etc £59,450

Reduction in general Committee Administration Costs £5,740

Total £65,190

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 By recommendation to the Council, the Cabinet has powers under the scheme of delegation to advise on the allocation of functions to the Committee. It is clear from this report that consultation will need to be undertaken before the Cabinet make a recommendation to the Council to alter the Constitution.

- 5.2 Under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972, only the Council can authorise changes to the Constitution.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The 'costs of democracy' are contained within direct cost budgets held in the Democratic Service codes in the Chief Executive's Department and others which have recharges applied from across the Council. The total amount of this budget for 2006/07 is £1,628,150 (£428,160 direct and £1,199,990 indirect) (See Appendix 1 for fuller details).
- 6.2 The need for the Council to find year on year savings reductions requires a clear understanding of the strategic priorities to be identified and then achieved.
- 6.3 The original savings target of £50,000 for 2006/7 is unlikely to be achieved, though every effort will be made to reduce the gap. The savings shortfall has been accommodated within the overall financial position of the Council as set out in the report on 2005/6 Annual Statement of Accounts, that was reported to Cabinet at its meeting on 27th June 2006. This savings target was assessed as a medium risk when determining key budget risks for 2006/07
- 6.4 However, it is anticipated that as part of the Service and Financial Planning Process for 2007/8, linked into the additional work that is proposed, then the savings that are required will be implemented for 2007/8 and beyond.
- 6.5 The effective implementation of Area Governance is seen as being central to the democratic engagement and accountability of the Council to its citizens. Failure to do this could result in damage to the reputation of the Council, to its ability to manage the regulatory planning environment, and to deliver on a key strategic objective.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Any improvements to Area Governance and decision making will have to be made within a changing organisational structure, where there will need to be new ways of working and approaches adopted.
- 7.2 A number of the recommendations and ensuing actions have been developed to improve opportunities for those whose views are often excluded from the democratic process and to encourage their greater participation, eg: Actions 30, 33 and 35.
- 7.3 There are likely to be a range of staffing changes that will impact on the way the Council delivers its services. Formal consultation with both the Trade Union and Staff Consultation Forum has commenced with those who will be effected.
- 7.4 The emerging agenda for local government emphasises the need to promote greater equality and diversity and to improve engagement with minority communities and those who often do not become fully involved in the democratic processes. The changes proposed for North Hertfordshire aim to enable such engagement.

- 7.5 Reducing the number of decisions made may in turn reduce the hours spent at committees thus helping to improve the work-life balance for both officers and members. However, the implications of smaller staff teams in Community Development and the Committee Secretariat to cover for sickness, annual leave, emergencies will have to be considered in planning workloads.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 Scrutiny have requested consideration of this report at the earliest opportunity and any recommendations will be forwarded to Cabinet.
- 8.2 The report will be submitted to all Area Committees for their comments prior to a further report back to Cabinet.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Cabinet is asked:

- 1) To agree the principles of the key proposals of the report as set out in Section 4;
- 2) To agree either Option 1 or Option 2 with regard to the establishment of a central Development Control Committee and a reduction of Area Committees;
- 3) To consult with Area Committees on the finer details of the report and its implications;
- 3) To agree that the Leader of the Council consider a greater delegation of responsibilities to Portfolio Holders;
- 4) To request the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to prepare a report on the constitutional implications of the proposed changes as set out in this report;
- 5) To note that a further report on detailed proposals and timescales for implementation will be submitted with recommendations to Council in February 2007.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To ensure effective implementation of the new Area Governance and decision making arrangements.
- 10.2 To ensure that savings identified within the context of the Service and Financial Planning process for 2006/7 and beyond are achieved.

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1 – Summary of Costs of Democracy.

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

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13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 Report to Cabinet on Area Governance May 17 2005
- 13.2 Report to Cabinet on Area Governance March 15 2005
- 13.3 Report to Area Committees on Area Governance, December 2005
- 13.4 Area Based Decision Making (ABDM) – IDeA Planning Advisory Service 2006
- 13.5 National prosperity, local choice and civic engagement – Lyons Inquiry into Local Government, May 2006.
- 13.6 Local Government Association – Closer to People and Places – a new vision for local government.

APPENDIX 1 – Summary of Costs of Democracy

Cost of Democracy Code Description	Projected Outturn 2006/07
Training	14,790
Car Allowances	8,630
Printing	78,430
Postage	16,030
Telephones	5,030
Member allowances	211,230
Miscellaneous	45,750
Sub Total	379,890
Recharges:	
Chief Executive (including democratic services)	429,520
Customer Services MSU	103,300
Amenity Administration	17,850
Finance and IT	51,320
Environment	29,800
Engineering	7,040
Housing	58,370
Building Services	9,500
Office accommodation	97,780
Legal	11,530
Audit and Financial Services	28,490
Development Control	349,820
Environmental Health	5,670
Sub Total	1,199,990
Chairman's Office	43,330
Leader's Expenses	4,940
Sub Total	48,270
Total	1,628,150

TITLE OF REPORT: POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES – HITCHIN WARDS

REPORT OF THE RETURNING OFFICER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to assist the Committee to consider revisions to the polling districts and polling places within the area of the Committee.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As a result of the Periodic Electoral Boundary Review, the Electoral Commission have accepted, without modification, the recommendations of the Boundary Committee. An Order has been issued enabling the new arrangements to be put in place in time for the elections due on 3 May 2007.
- 3.2 To introduce the new arrangements it is necessary to revise the existing polling districts and polling places where streets and properties have been moved from one Ward to another. This approach has a potential impact on all polling districts which means that this exercise becomes a complete review for the whole of the Council's area.
- 3.3 Once the new polling districts and polling places have been determined, necessary changes to the Electoral Register will be made in time for a revised electoral register to be published on 1 March 2007 (being the statutory date of the monthly revised register to be used for the purpose of validating nomination papers).
- 3.4 The following definitions are provided to assist the Committee:
- A **Polling District** is an area within a ward containing groups of electors. Each polling district forms a section of the electoral register and is given distinctive letters to distinguish it from other polling districts. Each polling district should form a convenient area for the purpose of polling;
 - A **Polling Place** is an area within a polling district which is small enough for electors to be able to identify with the location of polling station and give scope to Returning Officers to keep under review the sites of polling stations. This could be as tightly defined as a school building or as loosely defined as a geographical area encompassing part or all of a polling district.

4. ISSUES

- 4.1 In considering the establishment or variation of polling districts and places the following rules apply:
- a) all electors must be given such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances and in particular, so far as is reasonable, the places designated shall be accessible to electors who are disabled;
 - b) The designated polling place shall be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the polling district how they will be able to reach the polling station;
 - c) Each parish or community shall in the absence of special circumstances be a separate polling district or districts;
 - d) A polling place need not be designated for any polling district if the size and other circumstances are such that the situation does not materially affect the convenience of the electors or any body of them. In these circumstances, the polling place is defined as the area of the polling district.
- 4.2 The proposed polling districts for the whole area of the Committee are illustrated on maps in Appendix A together with a list of the streets to be included within each polling district. For comparative purposes lists of the streets in the current polling districts are set out in Appendix B.
- 4.3 The ward boundaries of North Hertfordshire were last altered in 1999. At that time all polling places were defined as being the building within which the Returning Officer located a polling station. In making this decision the Council effectively decided the location of the polling stations as the Returning Officer was left with little option other than to locate the polling stations within the designated buildings. Since 1999, to relocate a polling station the Returning Officer has been required to report to committee. Locating and re-locating polling stations is not a function of the Council. In order that the Returning Officer is able to fully exercise this responsibility, it is recommended that polling places are defined as being co-terminus with the polling districts. It is considered that the polling districts recommended in this report comply with the rules set out in 4.1
- 4.4 The attention of the Committee is drawn to Appendix C. This lists the polling stations that the Returning Officer intends to use during elections in 2007. Members will note that this is the same list as used during 2006.
- 4.5 There are likely to be few occasions when it will be necessary to move a polling station and when this does occur the Returning Officer will consult with Group Leaders to ensure that any relevant local knowledge is considered.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Section 18 of the 1983 Representation of the People Act requires that every Parliamentary Constituency is divided into polling districts and that a polling place be determined for each polling district. It is the duty of the Council to so divide its area. Constituency polling districts are also used for local government electoral purposes.

5.2 Provisions within the Electoral Administration Act 2006 require each local authority to undertake a complete review of the polling arrangements within the Council's area by no later than December 2007 and thereafter at four yearly intervals. The current review enables the Council to discharge the first part of this responsibility.

5.3 Within the Council's Constitution, this responsibility is delegated to area committees.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications.

6.2 Failure to determine a polling district scheme at this time will mean that the Electoral Registration Officer will be unable to publish the Electoral Register on 1 March 2007, upon which the elections, due to be held on 3 May 2007, will be based.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Returning Officer keeps the location of polling stations under review. A decision to allow polling places to be coterminous with polling districts will allow the Returning Officer to act without delay in relocating a polling station where access issues arise.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That the Committee agrees to establish polling districts in Hitchin as described in Appendix A.

8.2 That the Committee agrees to define all polling places within the Area of the Committee in such a way that they are coterminous with the polling districts.

9. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 To enable the Council to review the Authority's polling districts in light of the District of North Hertfordshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2006.

10. APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix A - Proposed polling districts (graphic)

10.2 Appendix B – Existing polling districts

10.3 Appendix C – Polling stations for use in May 2007

11. CONTACT OFFICERS

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12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 District of North Hertfordshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2006.

12.2 Maps for the existing polling districts of North Hertfordshire.

TITLE OF REPORT: DISPOSAL OF LAND AT REAR OF 79 TO 111, MILESTONE ROAD, WESTMILL, HITCHIN

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF REGULATORY SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To seek the Committee's views on the proposal to dispose at discount the vacant playground at the rear of 79 to 111, Milestone Road, Westmill, Hitchin to North Herts Homes (NHH).

2 FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the forward plan on the 1st December 2006.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The land was previously used as a children's' playground and is currently vacant. The area of the site is 1,341 sq. metres.
- 3.2 North Herts Homes are proposing to decant then demolish the 3 blocks of PRC flats at Milestone Road (36 units in total) in a phased approach and replace with 41 units (of single, 2 and 3 storey buildings). The vacant playground can be incorporated into NHH's development and provides space for the equivalent of 6 affordable units.
- 3.3 Issues to be addressed are site history, redevelopment proposal, planning consent and estimated discount value.

4. ISSUES

- 4.1 The site comprises a vacant children's playground at the rear of 79 to 111, Milestone Road. Actual site boundary, measuring 1,341 sq. m., shown on plan titled 'Land Disposal Rear of Milestone Road, Appendix A.
- 4.2 The Council's Adopted 2004 - 2010 Play Area & Outdoor Youth Provision strategy lists this site as surplus to requirements and scheduled it for decommissioning in 2004. By following the National Playing Fields Association guidelines for recommended catchment areas for play provision, Milestone Road falls within the catchment area of the play areas at John Barker Place and King George V Recreation Ground.
- 4.3 North Herts Homes are proposing to decant then demolish the 3 blocks of PRC flats (36 units in total) in a phased approach. Early sketch design plans have been completed and indicate a site potential of 41 units (of single, 2 and 3 storey buildings). There will be a mix rented and shared ownership properties throughout the site.

- 4.4 The additional land provided by NHDC will assist in the provision of 5 extra units for the full site and provides space for the equivalent of 6 affordable units. In addition the space allows a phased approach to the building programme and will assist in releasing units for the initial decant of tenants.
- 4.5 In accordance with the Housing Association Partnership Agreement the nomination agreement between NHDC and NHH for general needs accommodation will be 100% on first lettings and 75% thereafter from the additional units provided.
- 4.6 This Committee approved a planning application for this scheme on the 4th July 2006, minute 27, (ref. 06/00741/ 1). To ensure that the development made adequate play space provision for the occupiers of the proposed dwellings, the approval was subject to the provision of a Local Area for Play (LAP) on the development site.
- 4.7 Freehold transfer is proposed at £172,000 (averaging £28,670 per building for 6 plot site, final values to be confirmed). After allowing for site clearance this is £172,000 below the estimated disposal value of £344,000, a 50% discount.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Section 25 of the 1988 Local Government Act consents to the disposal of land to registered social landlords at less than market value for the development of housing, other than housing for outright sale.
- 5.2 Under Section 123 of the Local Govt. Act, 1972 to the extent (if any) that the land forms part of open space the intention to sell must first be advertised for two consecutive weeks in a local newspaper and consideration given to any objections received.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Current practice with land transfers to RSL's is disposal in a range of £10,000 to £30,000 per residential plot while average values of support towards RSL development in the region is currently £30,000 per plot and rising. Based on current plot values the level of discount/support for the site is £28,670 per dwelling.
- 6.2 No provision has been made in the capital programme for a grant contribution to this scheme in addition to any land discount provided. Provision for direct grant assistance may be made at a later date.
- 6.3 If the site were sold at full market value the total sale value would be available for capital purposes. However, the site does not lend itself to development without a partnership arrangement with NHH.
- 6.4 Risks identified with the project are that planning consent may be withheld and failure to obtain total funding for the project. Officers at both NHDC and NHH have been working closely on the proposed development to reduce the risk of scheme failure.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no human resource or equality implications arising from this report.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 The Council's Asset Disposal Strategy, approved July 2004, sets out that consultation should follow the following process; *"the relevant Ward Members will be consulted on any proposals and consideration be given to wider community consultation. Following consultation a report on the officers recommendations will be presented to the appropriate Area Committee for their views before seeking approval from the relevant delegated Member or Committee"*.
- 8.2 Project consultation has been undertaken between North Hertfordshire District Council and North Herts Homes.
- 8.3 The Ward members for Hitchin Oughton, Councillors David Billing and Joan Kirby has been notified of the redevelopment proposals. The views of the ward members and this Committee are sought and will be reported to Cabinet on 27th February 2007.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That as part of the consultation process the Committee gives its views to Cabinet on the proposal to declare the site surplus to the Council's requirements and to the dispose of the land to North Herts Homes at a discounted value for the provision of affordable housing.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The combined site is capable of development for the provision of 5 additional affordable dwellings by the RSL with the Authority benefiting from nomination rights to an additional 6 units to meet local need.
- 10.2 It is difficult to predict whether RSL's could compete with private developers or be able to fund development on the site that is capable of being sold at open market value without similar local authority support to that planned.
- 10.3 Section 25 of the 1988 Local Government Act consents the disposal of land to registered social landlords at less than market value for the development of housing. The discount proposed for the site is within current authority practice.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 11.1 Not develop the site for affordable housing and leave as a vacant site.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A – Existing site plan of the land at the rear of Milestone Road.

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 13.1 Report Writer - Barrie Jones, Head of Financial Services, Tel. 474243,
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13.2 Contributors:

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Housing – Alan Davey, Housing Strategy & Renewal Officer,	Tel. 474519
Leisure – Steve Geach, Parks & Countryside Development Manager,	Tel 474553

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 Estates and Housing Development Group files and minutes.

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REPORT ON HIGHWAY VERGE ASSESSMENT - NORTH HERTS HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP - JOINT MEMBER PANEL

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, THE HEAD OF PLANNING & BUILDING CONTROL AND THE HEAD OF HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

1. SUMMARY:

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- a) Obtain the Area Committee's views on the physical damage to highway verges within urban areas as set out in Appendix A and to report back the Committee's preferred schemes to the North Herts Highways Partnership (NHHP) – Joint Member Panel (JMP) meeting on 29th January 2007.

2. FORWARD PLAN

2.1 At present this report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 As part of the Council's Savings for 2006/7 it was agreed that the District's funding (£160,000) towards the NHHP would be withdrawn from 2007/08. The withdrawal of this funding means that Herts Highways (HH) will no longer:

- (a) Provide a nominated contact officer to assist ward members in their area;
- (b) Attend, liaise with and draw information from NHDC area committees;
- (c) Provide support to NHDC member surgeries.

3.2 Council officers have put in place alternative arrangements with HH. These include:

- (a) All minor faults, service requests, information requests to be sent via the Herts Highways fault web site. Members should refer constituents to the web site;

- (b) The JMP will continue in its existing form serviced by HH District Manager and supported by NHDC Committee Administration Service/Community Development Officers in ensuring that highway and verge schemes be considered at Area Committees and reported to Herts Highways for consideration by the JMP to be included on the Integrated Works Programme for highway street matters or the JMP discretionary budget programme for verges. Consideration of schemes and funding arrangements takes place twice a year, i.e. in the October and January.

4. ISSUES:

4.1 There are a number of issues associated with verges, this being:

- The physical damage caused to verges as a result of traffic and parking of vehicles;
- The enforcement of verge parking;
- The overall control of parking within residential areas surrounding town centres and railway stations.

4.2 Consideration has been given to enforcement and the current situation is that the 1955 Hertfordshire County Council byelaw is only applicable to Letchworth Garden City and cannot be practically extended to other areas within the district. NHDC does, voluntarily, enforce this byelaw on behalf of HCC but it is a resource intensive process that ultimately results in residents appearing in court with the expectation that a criminal conviction will be associated with a modest fine. The Council is not entitled to retain the revenue from this process, with costs likely to be much higher than the fine. Accordingly, consideration is being given to the use of TRO's, which will form part of the wider work programme to investigate a more comprehensive/strategic approach to implementing parking management around town centres and railway stations associated with reviewing the NHDC Car Parking Strategy. Both HH and the Police will be main consultees in this process particularly in relation to traffic regulation orders, powers of local authorities to provide parking places, etc. A report will be presented to Cabinet within this financial year outlining the corporate strategic approach to implementing parking management schemes.

4.3 Verges are the responsibility of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and there is an agreement with NHDC to maintain the grass, trees and shrubs (Green space) on the verges throughout the towns of NHDC. The HCC standards of maintenance of this Green space is significantly less than the NHDC standards and for many years this enhanced standard has been funded by NHDC.

4.4 In terms of changes and development of the verges, this is the sole responsibility of HCC/HH. Appendix A identifies those damaged verges where grass reinstatement is no longer a viable solution. This list was produced by our NHDC Grounds Maintenance Team for further discussion and consideration. It prioritises and gives an indication of the level of cost for the solution suggested.

4.5 Members of the area committees are now being asked to consider this list (appendix a) and consider if the list is appropriate in terms of:

- Comprehensive – issues with other damaged verges?
- Priority;
- Solution.

This Committee's views will be presented the JMP at their January committee for their consideration.

- 4.6 HH are primarily concerned with safety of the Highway and any available budget would need to be prioritised for this in the first instance. Trees for example are an emerging issues and will require additional funding in future years, much depends on the availability of funding from HCC/HH which may not meet the Members/local community expectations in terms of remedying many issues relating to verges. If NHDC were willing to provide additional funds, then there may be a possibility for more of these works identified in Appendix A to be completed.
- 4.7 Any proposals considered by the JMP that they consider are worthy of further consideration will require further work to be undertaken by HH and each of these stages will need to be resourced.
- (1) Feasibility – the most appropriate solution and estimate cost;
 - (2) Detailed design and procurement process;
 - (3) Project manage implementation of work and to provide the funding for such works.

Stages (2) and (3) will require additional resources that will need to be agreed prior to commencement.

- 4.8 At the meeting of 29th January, the JMP will consider and agree to fund a certain number of verge problem areas within the district. For 2007/08 this will be funded from the JMP discretionary budget programme. As stated above any additional works over and above the Herts Highways assessment criteria would require additional funding. To this end it is requested that:
- (a) Members give consideration to the schemes for their area as listed in Appendix A and agree which schemes they consider as high priority problem areas, and
 - (b) Which shemes Members consider important enough to provide additional funding.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report. However in undertaking any work in the highway, HH would have to satisfy themselves of their right to do so. Any works undertaken by HH would need to accord with Health and Safety guidelines and policies.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There will be ongoing financial implications associated with the maintenance of highway verges in terms of meeting Member expectations and Herts Highways JMP budget criteria, which requires additional funding for schemes put forward by Area committees over and above those identified by Herts Highways.
- 6.2 Improvements to grass verges would not count as capital items and would be funded from revenue and as referred in paragraph 4.3, NHDC's budget covers the routine maintenance of grass cutting, trees and shrubs and not for the reinstatement of physical damage to verges. There are no budgets available for additional funding with HCC for the physical reinstatement of verges.
- 6.3 The Council's Service and Financial Planning process is currently affirms the principle of not funding/subsidising services that are the responsibility of other bodies, such as HCC and thus contributions towards such services would prove difficult to justify.
- 6.4 The likely expectation from all of the Area Committees in terms of priority to verges is likely to be far in excess of the resources available to all parties HCC/HH/NHH/NHDC and the timescale to resolve many of these issues is likely to be significantly longer than anyone would like, particularly if it does not have Health & Safety implications.
- 6.5 There is risk associated with these schemes in terms of not all being addressed within the required timescale.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Due to the technical nature of the proposals in Appendix A, this work would be undertaken by HH and prioritised in their work programme.
- 7.2 In terms of NHDC staff, future works on Highways matters of this nature will need to be in accordance with Section 3 of this report.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 Through previous reports to Area Committees by the former Chief Engineer, Head of Housing & Environmental Health and Grounds Maintenance Manager on highway and verge matters.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That the Hitchin Committee consider the points raised in 4.5 and agree Appendix A to this report for Hitchin and recommends that the agreed schemes are put forwarded to the Joint Member Panel for consideration by the JMP on 29 January 2006.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To ensure that the highway verge problem schemes identified by the Area Committee are considered for inclusion in the JMP work programme for reinstatement in 2007/08.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 11.1 Alternative options is that additional funding is sought to ensure that the identified schemes are adequately resolved as part of the HH work programme.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A: - Damage Highway Verge Assessments.

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 13.1 Vaughan Watson, Head of Leisure and Environmental Services
- 13.2 David Scholes, Head of Planning & Building Control
- 13.3 Barrie Jones, Head of Financial Services
- 13.4 Louise Symes, Projects Manager, Planning Services
- 13.5 Steve Geach, Parks & Countryside Development Manager
- 13.6 Andy Godman, Head of Housing & Environmental Services

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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Damage Highway Verge Assessments							APPENDIX A:
Address	Location	Cause	Priority	Proposed Solution	Estimated Cost	NHDC Comments/Remarks	HH Comments/Remarks
21 Burford Way	Hitchin	Lack of Parking	Medium	Reinstate Only	Low		18 Wooden Bollards required @ a cost of £2800 inc TM
41 Burford Way	Hitchin	Lack of Parking	Medium	Reinstate Only	Low		
69 Burford Way	Hitchin	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Reinstate Only	Low		
79 Burford Way	Hitchin	Lack of Parking	Medium	Reinstate Only	Low		
The Crescent	Hitchin	Lack of Parking	High	Reinstate Only	Low	Area had porta cabins on it	6 Wooden Bollards required @ a cost of 1000 inc TM
28 Milestone Rd	Hitchin	Lack of Parking	Medium	Reinstate Only	Medium	Builders skip now gone	No Fault Found
97 Wymondley Rd	Hitchin	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Knee Rail	Medium	Large hole to infill	20 Wooden Bollards required @ a cost of £3000 inc TM
93 Wymondley Rd	Hitchin	Bad parking by others	Medium	Knee Rail	Medium	Main rd nowhere to park	
99 Wymondley Rd	Hitchin	Lack of Parking	Medium	Knee Rail	Medium		
Nine Springs Way	Hitchin	Bad parking by others	Medium	Reinstate Only	Medium	Building works in progress near shops	10 Wooden Bollards required @ a cost of £1500 inc TM
Broadmead	Hitchin	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Reinstate Only	Medium	The grass has never recovered from winter salt	No Fault Found
Tennyson Ave	Hitchin	Vehicle Over Run	High	Reinstate Only	Low	Hewden road works porta cabins	All road works complete. Verge is in an acceptable condition
St Michaels Rd	Hitchin	Vehicle Over Run	High	Reinstate Only	Low	Verges in need of repair after road works	
St Michaels Rd	Hitchin	Vehicle Over Run	High	Reinstate Only	Low	Area opposite the school	
Meadow Way	Hitchin			Bollards			4 Wooden Bollards required @ a cost of £725 inc TM
A505 opp Meadowbank	Hitchin						No Fault Found
Whitehill Road,	Hitchin			Bollards			Works already programmed
Old North Road - both sides from station to York Way & Burns Road.	Royston	Bad parking by others	High	Lay By	High	Very worn in places, rutted due to excessive off-road parking by residents. Reinstatement works from drainage and cable installation not reinstated, has now been run over. Would benefit from verges being made into off-road parking bays or strip of residential parking bays with permits.	The worst section is from the railway bridge to Orchard Road. The most cost effective solution to avoid costly stat diversions is to provide grass crete. Estimated Costs £20,500

Address	Location	Cause	Priority	Proposed Solution	Estimated Cost	NHDC Comments/Remarks	HH Comments/Remarks
A10 Melbourne Road both sides from cemetery entrances down to Drift Way	Royston	Bad parking by others	High	Lay By	High	Various areas becoming worn due to residential parking. Cable drainage works not reinstated which has now been run over. Would benefit from parking bays or extra grass-crete although existing grass-crete very worn	The site has not been inspected but the most cost effective solution to avoid costly stat diversions is to provide grass crete and this will match the other locations where grass crete has been used.
Newmarket Road, out side Owls Hatch	Royston	Bad parking by others	Low	Bollards	Medium	Grass areas becoming very worn and rutted in places. Damage being caused by parents dropping off children, or parking to take children to school. Is either side of pedestrian crossing.	
Lankester Road. To r/h side as you enter	Royston	Lack of Parking	High	Lay By	High	As road is not very wide, has limited access when residents park on both sides of road, residents are parking on verges and across paths to allow access into cul-de-sac.	The most cost effective solution to avoid costly stat diversions is to tarmac the narrow verge strip and tie into the existing footway, Estimated Costs £23000
Stakepiece Road, verges to cul de sac	Royston	Lack of Parking	Medium	Lay By	High	As road is not very wide, has limited access when residents park on both sides of road, residents are parking on verges and across paths to allow access into cul-de-sac.	The most cost effective solution to avoid costly stat diversions is to tarmac the narrow verge strip and tie into the existing footway, funded this year via the JMP and prgrammed to be completed in January 2007.
York Way , Greenfield. All verges front of factory units	Royston	Lack of Parking	High	Concrete	High	All grass verges are too small and not ideal for a high industrial area working. Cars, vans, lorries etc parking on verges either for parking whilst at work or dropping off / picking up deliveries. Parking areas not sufficient for factory units. If vehicles are parked on road others are having to mount verges to pass. Would benefit turning to hard surfaces.	The most cost effective solution to avoid costly stat diversions is to tarmac the verges in hot rolled ashpaht and tie into the existing footways. Estimated Costs for Orchard Road/York Way £50,000 - Estimated Cost for Greenfields £32,000

Address	Location	Cause	Priority	Proposed Solution	Estimated Cost	NHDC Comments/Remarks	HH Comments/Remarks
Baldock Road by roundabout	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Concrete	High	Push back kerbing to allow lorries to turn.	High priority, needs bollards £800
Bedford Road by bus stop junction with Bursland	Letchworth	Bad parking by others	Medium	Lay By	High	Extend to lay by to allow bus to stop as cars are parking while visiting shops.	Bollards recently installed in Bursland likely to raise priority, layby est £15,000. Needs investigation to establish viability
Common View f/o No. 4	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run	Low	Bollards	Low	Reinstate / add bollard	Low priority, needs numerous bollards
Cashio Lane, f/o 41-43	Letchworth	Bad parking by others	Low	Reinstate Only	Low		NHDC to reinstate
Eastern Way junction of Northfields	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Reinstate Only	Medium	Push back kerbing to allow larger vehicles to access turning	Wooden bollards recently installed
Archers Way both sides of road	Letchworth	Bad parking by others	Medium	Lay By	High	Residential parking, not enough on road parking for amount of vehicles in road.	Major scheme needed to address problem £60k+?
Glebe Road, f/o 53, 64-58 opp	Letchworth	Lack of Parking	Medium	Lay By	High	Extend lay by f/o 53, put in new lay by to f/o 58-64 accommodate vehicles parking on verge.	Major scheme needed to address problem £60k+?
Orchard Way, at junction with the Grange	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Bollards	Medium	Push back kerbing to allow larger vehicles to access turning as cars park just inside and others have to mount verge to pass.	High priority, needs bollards £500
Pixmore Way, f/o church, f/o 109	Letchworth	Bad parking by others	Low	Reinstate Only	Low	Reinstate and add bollards to prevent access onto verge.	High priority, needs bollards £800
Radburn Way, entrance to BP garage.	Letchworth	Bad parking by others	Medium	Reinstate Only	Low	Verge has sunk following redevelopment of fuel station, vehicles using to park while visiting garage when not buying fuel	Problem associated with building works at BP garage, now complete
Sollershot West, along length to l/h side	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run	Low	Reinstate Only	Low	As there is no kerb edge to road cars etc are running off road onto verge causing ruts and break up edge. From road to drainage run.	Residents consulted on possible kerbing in 2001, not acceptable
Woodhurst, at junction with Orchard Way	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run	Low	Reinstate Only	Low	Vehicles mounting kerb to allow others to pass if cars are parked to close to junction.	NHDC to reinstate
Norton Way South/Openshaw Way	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Knee Rail	Medium	50m Length	Bird beak fencing throughout £4000
Norton Way South/ Birds Hill	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Bollards	Medium	10m	
Norton Way South by phone box/shops	Letchworth	Bad parking by others	Medium	Bollards	Medium	50m Length	
Norton Way South by post box opp. No	Letchworth	Bad parking by others	Medium	Bollards	Medium		
Wilbury Road 27 - 29	Letchworth	Bad parking by others	Low	Bollards	Medium		NHDC to reinstate

Address	Location	Cause	Priority	Proposed Solution	Estimated Cost	NHDC Comments/Remarks	HH Comments/Remarks
Elderfields 2 - 4	Letchworth	Bad parking by others	Medium	Knee Rail	Medium		Also outside nos. 1-9, wooden bollards £800
Mullway No. 4, 24, 44 - 50 79-83, 105-109, 144, 175, 183	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Concrete	High	Restricted access to drives	Bird beak fencing throughout £10000
Monklands - 44- 46, 90-91,	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Concrete	High		Bird beak fencing throughout £10000
Runnalow 29 & 34	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Reinstate Only	Low		NHDC to reinstate
Southfields /Grange Rd. Junction	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Reinstate Only	Low		Project for Grange Improvement Forum (NHDC)
Southfields opp. Shops	Letchworth	Bad parking by others	Medium	Bollards	Medium		Building work on flats in progress, review when complete
Northfields, corner of Western Way	Letchworth	Bad parking by others	Medium	Bollards	Medium		Low priority, no serious problem perceived
Western Way junction Gaunts Way	Letchworth	Bad parking by others	Medium	Concrete	High		
Western Way, 180 - 182	Letchworth	Bad parking by others	Medium	Concrete	High		
Western Way 20 - 24	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run	Low	Concrete	High	Restricted access to drive	
Western Way 64 - 86	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Reinstate Only	Low		
Western Way / Kimberley Junction	Letchworth	Bad parking by others	Medium	Reinstate Only	Low		
Gaunts Way 114 - 126	Letchworth	Bad parking by others	Medium	Bollards	Medium		Low priority, no serious problem perceived
Orchard Way 1 - 11	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run	Low	Reinstate Only	Low	Caused by building works	Bird beak fencing recently installed at cost (HCC budget) of £3700
Bursland / Bedford Road Junction	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run	High	Bollards	Medium	By phone box & bus stop	Bollards recently installed at cost (HCC budget) of £3200
Icknield Way 55b - 69b	Letchworth	Lack of Parking	High	Concrete	High	70m stretch	Verge hardening, estimated £25000
Icknield Way 67 - 75 & 76 - 88	Letchworth	Lack of Parking	High	Concrete	High	2 x 50m lengths	
Highfield	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run		Bollards			Bollards recently installed at junction with West View, cost (HCC budget) of £650
Works Road to AM Motorcycles & Renault Garage	Letchworth	Vehicle Over Run					Bird beak fencing throughout £5000. Problems mainly due to vehicles associated with garage
Salisbury Lane	Offley						VXO,s required or 12 WB @ a cost of £1640
Clarion Close	Offley						No Fault Found
Gosling Avenue	Offley						NH Homes Layby scheme
London Road 52 - Templar Ave	Baldock	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Bollards	Medium		Bollards not appropriate,

Address	Location	Cause	Priority	Proposed Solution	Estimated Cost	NHDC Comments/Remarks	HH Comments/Remarks
London Road opp Page Close	Baldock	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Bollards	Medium	50m Length	use grasscrete, estimate £25000
Clothall Road	Baldock	Lack of Parking	Medium	Knee Rail	Medium	75m	Parking associated with school, bird beak fencing £4000
St. Mary's Way	Baldock	Bad parking by others	High	Bollards	Medium	Deep ruts	Some bollards recently installed, need more precise location of this site
Church Street / Icknield Way	Baldock	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Bollards	Medium		Need more precise location
Norton Road / Icknield Way	Baldock	Vehicle Over Run	Medium	Bollards	Medium		Building work in progress, review when complete

TITLE OF REPORT: CHAMPION NEWS

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Development Officer has been involved during the past month.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention some important community based activities that will be taking place during the next few months.

1. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

1. PROJECT/ACTIVITY/SCHEME DETAILS

- 3.1 **North Herts Book Festival** - the North Herts Book Festival is a new event with the potential to become a major annual community occurrence. It is proposed to hold the first Book Festival from the 1st to 18th March 2007.

Events are being planned throughout the District with a number taking place in Hitchin. Some of these will take place in local schools, bookshops, The British Schools, the Museum and Hitchin Market.

A detailed programme of events will be available nearer the date.

- 3.2 **Charlton Society** - discussions have been taking place with Charlton Society about issues they have and how they can be supported with these.
- 3.3 **Hardy Close Residents Association** - the Association's next meeting is on Thursday 1st February, 2007.
- 3.4 **Town Centre Locality Panel** - two meetings of the panel have taken place to discuss a multi agency approach in addressing issues in the Town Centre. The main issue is the gathering of young people in large numbers in the Market area. A number of diversionary activities for the young people are being investigated including a venue which could be used as a drop-in facility.
- 3.5 **Westmill Youth Work Project** - the Action Plan for 2006/2007 has been completed and sets out the development of the project.

There are five aims to be delivered through a multi agency approach. Resources and targets have been identified and set with monitoring and evaluation continuing throughout the project.

The five aims are:

1. To create and sustain a multi agency approach to Youth Work on the Westmill Estate for 5 years;
 2. To create informal educational opportunities through vibrant and structured projects for young people 11 – 19;
 3. To enable young people to actively participate in the regeneration of their local community;
 4. To reduce within a 3 year period instances of youth related crime;
 5. To improve and create opportunities for young people and the wider community to understand each others needs.
- 3.6 **Ickleford Road Residents Association** - it was agreed at their meeting on 29th November, 2006, to form an Association and to continue to raise their issues regarding the traffic problems on Ickleford Road. The next meeting of the Association is on Wednesday 7th February, 2007.
- 3.7. **Hitchin Museum** - the Museum has two new exhibitions starting on 13th January. European Inspirations is a joint exhibition by the highly respected local artists Anne Songhurst and Krysia Michna Nowak.
- The Lucas Family Album exhibition displays the wealth of Lucas material in the Museum's collection and is a chance to view rarely seen items.
- 3.8 **Hitchin Alottments Update** -
- Burford Way - the new gate and fencing has been installed at the 'nursery' end of the site. A combination lock will be installed on the 8th of January, 2007.
- Old Hale Way - capital programme works are continuing with replacement vehicle gate, replacement standpipe posts, new standpipe and new ascot fencing to contain the main car park. Young Offenders are due to start tidying unused land adjacent to bottom car park.
- Ransoms - a replacement pedestrian gate has been installed.
- A grant application has been made for plot clearance at Burford Way to enable two extra plots to be released.
- 3.9. **Bancroft Play Area** - the construction of the new play area at Bancroft is expected to begin mid February, 2007, with a proposed Easter launch.
- 3.10 **Gurdwara, Wilbury Way** - with the identification of community facilities available at the Gurdwara, the Health Officer and Over 50's Development Officer at the Council, are meeting with a representative from the Gurdwara to discuss working together on possible activities.
- 3.11 **Sainsburys Trolleys** - Sainsburys in Hitchin have now registered with the Abandoned Trolley Collection Scheme and once notified of an abandoned trolley they have agreed to collect the trolley within 48 hours. The telephone number to report abandoned Sainsburys trolleys in Hitchin is 01462 454833. This number will be available on the website shortly.

3.12 **Update Report on Controlled Parking zones:**

Reference is made to resolution (5) of minute 81 of the Hitchin Committee Meeting held 12 December 2006 where Members requested an update on CPZs.

The Avenue CPZ:

The Avenue CPZ area contains: The Avenue, Chiltern Road, The Finches, Lower part of Highbury Road and part of Benslow Lane between the junction with Highbury Road and the Music School. This CPZ will be added to the existing CPZ restrictions in Benslow Rise and when complete will form the new zone 'E'.

The notice of our intent to inform an order was published on Thursday 4 January 2007. The consultation period will be for 29 days and will end on Friday 2 Feb 2007. Assuming that there are no objections to the order, our intent would be to start installation of the zone with a view of completion this financial year. If objections are made this will have an impact on the timing and Members will be informed.

The Triangle CPZ

This area covers – Radcliffe Road, Dacre Road, Garden Row, Walsworth Road, Verulum Road, Convent Close, Kings Road, Alexander Road and Florence Street and the cottages at the railway station.

While the consultation period is happening on The Avenue, officers will take the advantage of this period to prepare a draft questionnaire to support the plan for the proposed CPZ area for The Triangle. This draft questionnaire, as agreed at the last meeting with the Triangle Residents Association and Members, will be sent to the TRA, TRAPS and to Local Members for comment. Once this draft questionnaire has been agreed we will then formally submit the questionnaire and plan to the local residents in early spring.

Remaining CPZs:

The Council has agreed funding to continue with the implementation of The Avenue and the Triangle CPZs, which are progressed to a reasonable stage. With regard to the other CPZ schemes, which have been requested and "logged" on a long list during the last 3/4 years, it is proposed that a more comprehensive approach is taken to the control of on street parking, which avoids the dangers of local schemes causing displacement to other nearby residential areas. This may involve a mix of control measures, which will be subject of discussions with HCC/Herts Highways. This wider work programme to investigate a more comprehensive /strategic approach to implementing parking management around town centres and railway stations will be associated with reviewing the NHDC Car Parking Strategy. Subject to discussions with HCC/Herts Highways a report will be presented to Cabinet within this financial year outlining the corporate strategic approach to implementing parking management schemes.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well-being.

5. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 To ensure that the Committee are kept informed of the work of the Community

Development Officer.

6. CONTACT OFFICER

- 6.1 Margaret Bracey, Community Development Officer. Ext: 4830.
Email. Margaret.bracey@north-herts.gov.uk.

TITLE OF REPORT: ANNUAL GRANTS, DEVELOPMENT, DISCRETIONARY AND VISIONING BUDGETS 2006//2007

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee's delegated funds.
- 1.2 For the Committee to consider the level of financial assistance to be awarded for plot clearance at Burford Way Allotments.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This Report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. ANNUAL GRANTS, DEVELOPMENT, DISCRETIONARY AND VISIONING BUDGETS UPDATE

- 3.1 The present summary is attached at Appendix A.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Committee has delegated powers to administer funds from the budgets described.
- 4.2 There are no legal implications pertinent to this report.

5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications that have not been specified in the main body of the report.

6. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 6.1 Ward Members will be consulted about relevant grant applications.
- 6.2 Ward Members have been consulted in connection with projects that have been carried forward from previous years.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Committee is asked to note the current expenditure and balance of the Development budget.
- 7.2 That the Committee allocate, from their Member's Discretionary Ward Budget, £16 (from each Member) towards the £200 for plot clearance at Burford Way allotments as set out in Appendix B.

8. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 This report is intended simply to inform Members of the financial resources available to the Committee. It draws attention to the current budgetary situation, assists in the effective financial management of the Area Committee's budget and ensures actions are performed within the Authority's Financial Regulations and the guidance contained in the Grants procedure.
- 8.2 The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims and Strategic Objectives of the Council.

9. APPENDICES

- 9.1 Appendix A - Annual Grant and Development Discretionary Budget Update
- 9.2 Appendix B - Grant Application for plot clearance at Burford Way Allotments.

10. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 10.1 Margaret Bracey, Community Development Officer, margaret.bracey@north-herts.gov.uk, x4830

Jodie Penfold, Assistant Directorate Accountant, jodie.penfold@north-herts.gov.uk
x4332

HITCHIN AREA COMMITTEE BUDGET 2006/2007

SUMMARY/ TOTALS	Funding	Allocated	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated Budget
Revenue Visioning	£40,915	£40,784	£37,019	£3,765	£131
Capital Visioning	£112,600	£110,350	£0	£110,350	£2,250
Central Area Grants	£37,580	£37,899	£39,322	-£1,423	-£319
Discretionary - Bearton Ward	£13,800	£12,667	£450	£12,217	£1,133
Discretionary - Highbury Ward	£25,360	£24,227	£4,880	£19,347	£1,133
Discretionary - Oughton Ward	£6,840	£6,118	£450	£5,668	£722
Discretionary - Priory Ward	£3,600	£2,878	£600	£2,278	£722
Discretionary - Walsworth Ward	£6,310	£5,467	£5,204	£263	£843
Total	£247,005	£240,390	£87,926	£152,464	£6,615

HITCHIN AREA COMMITTEE BUDGET 2006/2007

REVENUE VISIONING	Funding	Project	Allocated	Date Allocated	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated Budget	Comments
Pre allocated Funds Brought Forward from 2005/06	£20,060	Bring Bank (Woodside Screening)	£1,670	21.10.03	£1,670	£0		
		Town Centre Strategy	£1,500	21.10.03	£927	£573		Can be reallocated
		Visioning Presentations	£500	02.11.04	£494	£7		Can be reallocated
		Enhancement of Triangle Area	£3,130	02.11.04	£3,130	£0		
		Churchgate Project	£4,000	24.05.05	£5,250	-£1,250		Complete - reallocated to community projects
		BMX Dirt Bike Track	£2,500	01.03.05	£2,212	£288		Ongoing
		Tree Planting - Butts Close	£1,500	08.11.05	£0	£1,500		Awaiting settlement
		Community Centre Leaflet	£700	08.11.05	£0	£700		Awaiting settlement
		Cabbies Hut Market Place	£1,300	24.01.06	£1,320	-£20		Overspend
		East of England Dev Agency	£3,260	24.03.06	£3,268	-£8		Overspend
Visioning Community Projects 05/06 C/F plus schemes reallocated to Visioning Community Projects	£14,690	Hitchin Town Centre Initiative - Hanging Baskets	£11,750	18.04.06	£11,750	£0		
	£6,165	Hanging Baskets - Market Place, Hitchin	£1,300	18.04.06	£1,300	£0		
		Hitchin Pavilions	£5,000	04.07.06	£5,000	£0		
		Market Advertising	£2,000	04.07.06	£0	£2,000		Awaiting settlement
		Bench	£674	24.08.06	£699	-£25		Overspend
Total	£40,915		£40,784		£37,019	£3,765	£131	

CAPITAL VISIONING	Funding	Project	Allocated	Date Allocated	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated Budget	Comments
Capital Visioning	£112,600	Bancroft Gardens	£67,500	15.08.06	£0	£67,500		In progress
		Windmill Hill	£42,850	15.08.06	£0	£42,850		In progress
Total	£112,600		£110,350		£0	£110,350	£2,250	

DEVELOPMENT BUDGETS

Central Area Grants	Funding	Project	Allocated	Date Allocated	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated Budget	Comments
Base Budget 06/07 plus £650 from each ward member to fund Hitchin & Strathmore Fun Club	£36,930	Vaisakhi Festival	£1,000	07.03.06	£1,400	-£400		Overspend due to traffic signage
	£650	Rhythms of the World Festival	£10,000	18.04.06	£10,000	£0		
		Tilehouse Street Pre-School	£1,000	18.04.06	£1,000	£0		
		North Herts Amateur Boxing Club	£999	18.04.06	£999	£0		
		Hitchin Town Bowls Club	£1,000	18.04.06	£1,000	£0		
		Apni Duniya Club	£250	18.04.06	£250	£0		
		Hitchin Festival	£2,000	18.04.06	£2,000	£0		
		Hitchin Senior Citizens	£4,000	18.04.06	£4,000	£0		
		Triangle Festival	£5,000	30.05.06	£6,023	-£1,023		Overspend
		Hitchin Rugby Club	£1,000	30.05.06	£1,000	£0		
		Hitchin Town Band	£1,000	30.05.06	£1,000	£0		
		Youth Project - Westmill Estate	£10,000	24.01.06	£10,000	£0		
		Hitchin & Strathmore Fun Club	£650	01.09.06	£650	£0		
Total	£37,580		£37,899		£39,322	-£1,423	-£319	

Bearton	Funding	Project	Allocated	Date Allocated	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated Budget	Comments
Pre allocated Funds Brought Forward from 2005/06	£12,450	Traffic and Parking Schemes	£4,830	25.03.03	£0	£4,830		Herts Highways
		Local Environment Issues	£4,830	25.03.03	£0	£4,830		Triangle Planning Project
		Dogbin Brampton Park	£350	31.03.04 & 08.11.05	£350	£0		
		Local Environment & Parking	£2,440	31.03.04	£0	£2,440		Triangle Planning Project
Member Discretionary Budget 2006/07:								
Member 1	£500	Hitchin Boys School	£100	31.10.06	£100	£0		
Member 2	£500	Hitchin Fairtrade Steering Group	£117	12.12.06	£0	£117		Awaiting settlement
Member 3	£500							
less £50 from each member to fund Hitchin & Stathmore Fun Club	-£150							
Total	£13,800		£12,667		£450	£12,217	£1,133	

Highbury	Funding	Project	Allocated	Date Allocated	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated Budget	Comments
Pre allocated Funds Brought Forward from 2005/06	£24,010	Leisure Projects	£4,230	25.03.03	£0	£4,230		Ongoing
		Vehicle Activated Signs - Stevenage Road	£4,000	25.03.03	£0	£4,000		Herts Highways
		Vehicle Activated Signs - Wymondley Road	£4,000	25.03.03	£0	£4,000		Herts Highways
		The Maples/Stevenage Road	£3,000	21.10.03	£0	£3,000		Herts Highways
		No right turn Stevenage Road/ Sunnyside	£4,000	01.03.01	£0	£4,000		Herts Highways
		Brookview Play Area	£3,430	31.03.04	£3,430	£0		
		The Dell - Tree Felling and Rubbish Removal	£1,200	16.08.05	£1,200	£0		
		Replace Tree in Woodside Carpark	£150	24.01.05	£150	£0		
Member Discretionary Budget 2006/07								
Member 1	£500	Hitchin Boys School	£100	31.10.06	£100	£0		
Member 2	£500	Hitchin Fairtrade Steering Group	£117	12.12.06	£0	£117		Awaiting settlement
Member 3	£500							
less £50 from each member to fund Hitchin & Stathmore Fun Club	-£150							
Total	£25,360		£24,227		£4,880	£19,347	£1,133	

Oughton	Funding	Project	Allocated	Date Allocated	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated Budget	Comments
Pre allocated Funds Brought Forward from 2005/06	£5,940	Road Safety and Traffic Calming	£2,590	25.03.03	£0	£2,590		Herts Highways
		Traffic Calming Moss Way/Redhill Rd	£3,000		£0	£3,000		Herts Highways
		Dog Bin - Lucas Lane	£350	04/05 & 08-11-05	£350	£0		
Member Discretionary Budgets 2006/07:								
Member 1	£500	Hitchin Boys School	£100	31.10.06	£100	£0		
Member 2	£500	Hitchin Fairtrade Steering Group	£78	12.12.06	£0	£78		Awaiting settlement
less £50 from each member to fund Hitchin & Stathmore Fun Club	-100							
Total	£6,840		£6,118		£450	£5,668	£722	

Priority	Funding	Project	Allocated	Date Allocated	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated Budget	Comments
Pre allocated Funds Brought Forward from 2005/06	£2,700	Town Centre Manager	£1,500	31.03.04	£0	£1,500		
		Rise Bollards in Town Centre	£700	31.03.04	£0	£700		
		Replace Trees in Various Locations	£500	24.01.05	£500	£0		
Member Discretionary Budget 2006/07:								
Member 1	£500	Hitchin Boys School	£100	31.10.06	£100	£0		
Member 2	£500	Hitchin Fairtrade Steering Group	£78	12.12.06	£0	£78		Awaiting settlement
less £50 from each member to fund Hitchin & Stathmore Fun Club	-£100							
Total	£3,600		£2,878		£600	£2,278	£722	

Walsworth	Funding	Project	Allocated	Date Allocated	Spent	Outstanding	Unallocated Budget	Comments
Pre allocated Funds Brought Forward from 2005/06	£4,583	Tarmacing Walsworth Common	£4,233		£4,233	£0		
		Dog Bin for Purwell Meadows - Chaucer Way Exit	£350	14.02.06	£350	£0		
Member Discretionary Budget 2006/07:								
Member 1	£500	Walsworth Festival	£377	31.05.06	£265	£112		Ongoing
Member 2	£500	Walsworth Common Litter Pickers	£176	27.06.06	£176	£0		
Member 3	£500	Community Meetings - Hardy Close residents	£64	30.08.06	£38	£26		Ongoing
plus £377 reallocated from Tarmacing Walsworth Common	£377	Friends of Walsworth Common	£50	28.09.06	£43	£7		Ongoing
less £50 from each member to fund Hitchin & Stathmore Fun Club	-£150	Hitchin Boys School	£100	31.10.06	£100	£0		
		Hitchin Fairtrade Steering Group	£117	12.12.06	£0	£117		Ongoing
Total	£6,310		£5,467		£5,204	£263	£843	

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

16

TITLE OF REPORT: HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANGER

This item will be in the format of an oral presentation by the Hitchin Town Centre Manager.

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