

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

ROYSTON & DISTRICT COMMITTEE

(Royston and Ermine Ward – Parishes of Barkway, Barley, Kelshall, Nuthampstead, Reed and Therfield)

**Meeting held at Coombes Community Centre, Burns Road, Royston
on 23 August 2006 at 7.30 p.m.**

PRESENT: *Councillors Mrs F.R. Hill (Chairman), H.M. Marshall (Vice-Chairman), Liz Beardwell, A.F. Hunter, R.E. Inwood, and F.J. Smith.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Mary Caldwell (Planning Control & Conservation Manager), Tom Rea (Area Planning Officer), Alan Fleck (Community Development Officer for Royston) and Donna Levett (Committee & Member Services Officer).*

ALSO PRESENT: *Mr Stephen Boulton, Mr Paul Tovell and Mr Alan Duncan (Anglian Water), Mr Henry Grace (Terra Eco Systems), Roger Harrison (Public Relations Manager, North Hertfordshire District Council), Councillor Sarah Wren (Portfolio Holder for Housing & Environmental Health, North Hertfordshire District Council), County Councillor Doug Drake and 41 members of the public.*

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone present to the meeting, particularly the representatives from Anglian Water and Terra Eco Systems and Councillor Sarah Wren, who were present for discussions about the nuisance odours experienced in Royston (Agenda Item 6).

The Chairman also informed all those present that, because of the size of the room, there were difficult acoustics and asked that all speakers spoke slowly and clearly in order to be heard.

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P.C.W. Burt.

33. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2006 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman.

In response to a request from the Chairman, the Community Development Officer for Royston read out the Cabinet's decision in relation to the planned refurbishment of public conveniences in the District, which included acknowledgement of the Committee's referral at its meeting of 12 July 2006 (Committee Minute 23 and Cabinet Minutes 37 and 40 refer).

The Committee expressed their disappointment that the Cabinet had not agreed the Committee's recommendation to retain the public conveniences at the Royston Bus Station, but acknowledged that capital expenditure issues were a consideration in the decision. The Committee also expressed their strong disappointment that the request for alternative provision methods at that location had not been implemented and suggested that the public conveniences at the Bus Station could be retained in place of those at another, less well-used location in the town.

Councillor Hunter therefore **PROPOSED**, Councillor Hill **SECONDED** and it was

REFERRED TO CABINET: That Cabinet be requested to consider:

- (1) The replacement or refurbishment of the public conveniences at Royston Bus Station during the current year or alternative methods of provision of public conveniences at Royston Bus Station;

- (2) Should the proposals at (1) above not be implemented, the inclusion of capital expenditure to replace or refurbish the existing public conveniences at Royston Bus Station in the Budget for the financial year 2007/2008.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that provision of public conveniences in Royston meet the needs of local residents and visitors to the town.

34. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman provided an update for the Committee on the problems recently experienced with flooding in Royston. She informed them that she had spoken with the Highways Authority, who had stated that they had visited the town to assess the areas where the flooding had occurred. Where scope for remedial works had been identified these would be undertaken, but the Highways Authority had emphasised the unusual nature of the weather and confirmed that there had been high level of investment in flooding and drainage works in the town in recent years.

No other business was submitted for consideration by the Committee.

35. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were made during the meeting.

36. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No items were presented for consideration by the Committee under general public participation.

Planning Application – Heath House, Princes Mews, Royston

Mr Des O'Connell had given due notice that he wished to speak at the meeting regarding planning application reference 06/00555/1 – Heath House, Princes Mews, Royston. Mr O'Connell was speaking as an objector to the application.

As the occupier of a property which backed on to the application site, Mr O'Connell expressed his grave concerns with regard to the size of the development, which he felt would look gross and out of place in comparison to neighbouring properties. He also drew the Committee's attentions to the concerns expressed by the Royston Town Council, English Heritage, and other organisations, businesses and residents, and asked the Committee to seriously consider the impact of the proposed development on the surrounding environment.

The Chairman thanked Mr O'Connell for addressing the Committee and informed him that the points he had raised would be considered when the Committee determined the application.

Planning Application – Meridian Works, Barkway Road, Royston

Mr Don Proctor had given due notice that he wished to speak at the meeting regarding planning application reference 06/01087/1 – Meridian Works, Barkway Road, Royston. Mr Proctor was the applicant's representative.

Mr Proctor informed the Committee that the continuation of the use of the site for commercial purposes was both unsustainable and inappropriate, especially as it was surrounded by residential properties. He also outlined the applicant's proposals for relocation of the existing businesses from the site, and provided comparisons with other similar brownfield developments which he felt demonstrated that this development was a feasible proposal.

The Chairman thanked Mr Proctor for addressing the Committee and informed him that the points raised in his presentation would be considered when the Committee determined the application.

Planning Application – Earls Wood Cottage, Barkway

Mr R. Kennedy, the applicant, had given due notice that he wished to speak at the meeting regarding planning application reference 06/01432/1 – Earls Wood Cottage, Barkway. However, as there were no objectors registered to speak against the application, Mr Kennedy

informed the Chairman that he would not address the Committee unless there were any questions they wished to ask.

Planning Application – 2 High Street, Barley

Mr Malcolm Brown had given due notice that he wished to speak at the meeting regarding planning application reference 06/01015/1HH – 2 High Street, Barley.

Mr Brown informed the Committee that he had no objection to the proposed new extension but felt that the requirement for the applicant to carefully take apart, relocate and reassemble the existing lean-to was inappropriate as the structure was of no architectural or historical significance. Mr Brown therefore asked that the Committee removed this condition and granted permission for the extension.

Mr G. Stacey had also given due notice that he wished to speak at the meeting regarding that planning application but was unable to attend the meeting. Mr Stacey, who was the applicant, submitted a written statement to the Committee which had been circulated for Members' information.

The Chairman informed Mr Brown that the points he had raised and those in Mr Stacey's statement would be considered when the Committee determined the application.

37. NUISANCE ODOURS IN ROYSTON

Following the presentation of a petition relating to a nuisance odour regularly experienced by some residents in Royston at the Committee's meeting held on 12 July 2006 (Minute 20 refers), the Committee received presentations from representatives of Anglian Water and Terra Eco Systems.

Mr Tovell of Anglian Water informed the Committee that until recently there had been a stockpile of limed cake (treated product) at the sewage treatment works outside Royston. When this stockpile was handled to remove some for delivery this caused unpleasant odours, and so the stockpile had been removed from the site. Mr Tovell also stated that as part of the company's capital investment programme there was a project to construct a concrete area for stockpiling raw product from other areas. However, because of the odour experienced in Royston, this product had been suspended for six months, to allow a feasibility review to be carried out.

Mr Grace of Terra Eco Systems explained to the Committee that his organisation was a recycling branch of Thames Water, treating and recycling sewage and waste water products for use in agriculture. He explained that there was a slight odour arising from these operations, but that they were carefully scheduled to take account of wind directions and other such factors in order to minimise the impact on any residential settlements. Mr Grace also informed the Committee that full monitoring records were compiled during each operation to ensure that any problems reported could be related directly to the source, and that no complaints had been received related to the two operations that summer, and other complaints received were proven not to be related to any Terra Eco Systems operations.

Councillor Sarah Wren expressed the Council's commitment to addressing the problems that Royston residents had experienced with nuisance odours, and outlined some of the steps that the Council had already taken and the partnership working arrangements now in place. She also encouraged residents to report any nuisance odours to the Council's Environmental Health department when they occurred, so that the problems could be addressed straight away.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr Grace confirmed that, whilst product spread on farmers' fields was required to be ploughed in within 24 hours, the only legislation governing its storage were the Guidelines for Agricultural Practice which stated that farmers must incorporate any product which might cause an offensive odour as soon as practicable, with no specified timescale.

The Chairman thanked Mr Boulton, Mr Tovell, Mr Duncan, Mr Grace and Councillor Wren for attending the Committee and for their presentations. She also expressed the Committee's support for the ongoing commitment by all parties to tackle any nuisance odour issues as soon as they occurred.

RESOLVED:

- (1) To note the information provided by the representatives of Anglian Water and Terra Eco Systems;
- (2) That a site visit for all Committee Members to the Royston Sewage Treatment Works be arranged in consultation with the representatives of Anglian Water;
- (3) That copies of the operational reports from Terra Eco Systems be appended to the Minutes of the meeting for information;
- (4) That representatives of Anglian Water be invited to attend the meeting of the Committee to be held on 14 March 2007 to provide an update on the current status of operations and the company's decision with regards to the construction of a larger raw product storage area at the Royston Sewage Treatment Works site.

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep the Committee apprised of operations on and around the Royston Sewage Works site that could result in a nuisance odour for some residents of Royston, and the steps being taken by Anglian and Thames Water to address the problem.

38. PARKING ISSUES IN ROYSTON

The Chairman informed the Committee that, subsequent to the Committee's demand for the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Transport and the Strategic Director of Customer Services to attend the meeting, she had received letters from them confirming that they would not be present. The Chairman then read these letters to the Committee and stated that a copy of the letter from the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Transport would be appended to the Minutes of the meeting.

The Committee acknowledged the need for statistical evidence to determine the effects of the increased car parking charges and also identified the need for measures such as independent retail assessments to further illustrate the problems experienced in the town.

RESOLVED: That the information provided at Agenda Item 7 and in the letters from the Strategic Director of Customer Services and the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Transport be noted.

REFERRED TO CABINET:

- (1) That the review of parking charges in Royston be brought forward to December 2006;
- (2) That an independent retail assessment be undertaken to determine the current situation in Royston and the economic pressures and concerns to its vitality and viability;
- (3) That the Cabinet reconsider its policy for car parking charges in Royston due to the unique nature of the town in comparison to the rest of the District, informed by the outcomes of the independent retail assessment;
- (4) That the petition presented to the Committee at its meeting on 12 July 2006 (Minute 20 (a) refers) be considered when undertaking the above reviews.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that the concerns expressed by the Committee, residents and businesses in and around Royston are addressed and the appropriateness of car parking charges be confirmed.

39. NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP JOINT MEMBER PANEL DISCRETIONARY BUDGET FOR 2006/2007 AND 2007/2008

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Engineer which provided details of the cost and feasibility of projects suggested by the Committee at the meeting on 12 July 2006 for funding from the Joint Member Panel's Discretionary Budget (Minute 24 refers).

The Committee assessed the responses to the projects as set out in paragraph 4.1, and discussed which projects should be identified as priorities and required Committee funding. It was noted that the Committee had a balance of £62,700 in their Capital Visioning budget which could be allocated toward highways projects.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report of the Chief Engineer be noted;
- (2) That the following schemes and projects should be placed in the Joint Member Panel's Discretionary Budget for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008:
 - Junction of Green Drift/Kneesworth Street, Royston – measures to address problems with flooding;
 - High Street, Barkway – resurfacing at lower end to rectify subsidence
 - Fish Hill, Royston – installation of a speed table to the rear of the Corn Exchange
 - Briary Lane, Royston – implementation of double yellow lines on corner of Briary Lane and Sun Hill, Royston
 - Rock Road, Royston – extension of double yellow lines to ensure clear and safe access to road
 - Burns Road, Royston – installation of speed bumps
- (3) That the installation of railings for protection of properties and pedestrians on Barkway Road, Royston should be identified as a priority scheme and implemented as soon as possible, funded by the Highways Agency as this site was part of the A10;
- (4) That the installation of a crash barrier to separate the two sides of the carriageway on the Royston Bypass should be put forward for implementation but not funded from Committee budgets as the road was outside the scope of the town;
- (5) That contributions for funding towards the schemes and projects listed at (2) above be provisionally allocated from the Committee's Capital Visioning budget, subject to their approval and the provision of funding from the North Hertfordshire Highways Partnership Joint Member Panel's Discretionary Budget;
- (6) That, whilst listed as a scheme for implementation in the Integrated Work Programme for 2006/2007, the resurfacing of York Way, Royston, be identified as a key priority and implemented as soon as possible;
- (7) That the North Herts District Manager (Hertfordshire Highways) be notified of the Committee's decisions.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To provide financial support for the implementation of traffic management and road safety in the Royston & District area.

40. REVIEW OF MEMBERS' SURGERIES IN ROYSTON

The Community Development Officer for Royston presented a report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services to the Committee, which reviewed the success of Members' Surgeries held over the period February 2005 to August 2006.

Councillor Smith suggested that the low number of visitors to the Surgery indicated that the public were not finding them a helpful way to contact their local Councillors. In light of the Councillors' availability via e-mail, post, telephone or in person through their home addresses, Councillor Smith felt that it would therefore be sensible to discontinue the Surgeries.

However, other Members of the Committee felt that it would be more appropriate to make adjustments such as reducing the frequency of the Surgeries to try and increase visitor numbers before discontinuing them completely. Particular reference was made to the Surgery held in September 2005 which had had 10 visitors, and it was highlighted that the two Surgeries which had not had any visitors had been in January and August 2006, both key holiday periods.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the frequency of Members' Surgeries be reduced to bi-monthly, with the next Surgery to be held on 2 September 2006;
- (2) That additional steps be taken to improve advertisement of the Surgeries, such as display of a banner or board outside the venue to attract passing residents;
- (3) That the viability of the continuation of Members' Surgeries be reassessed at the meeting of the Committee to be held on 14 March 2007.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS: The efficient use of resources in communicating with the public.

41. CHAMPION NEWS

The Community Development Officer for Royston presented a report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services to the Committee, which advised them of the activities undertaken by the Community Development Officer for Royston since the meeting of the Committee held on 12 July 2006, and brought to their attention some important community based activities that would be taking place during the next few months.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services be noted;
- (2) That the actions taken by the Community Development Officer for Royston to promote greater community capacity and well-being for communities in the Royston & District area be endorsed.

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep members of the Committee apprised of the latest developments in community activities in the Royston & District area.

42. AREA COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT BUDGET 2006/2007

The Community Development Officer for Royston presented a report of the Head of Community Development & Cultural Services to the Committee, which set out the budgetary situation for the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the current expenditure and balance of the Development Budget be noted;
- (2) That the Committee's Capital Visioning Budget be allocated for highways improvement projects.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) The report was intended to apprise Members of the financial resources available to this Committee. It drew attention to the current budgetary situation, assisted in the effective financial management of the Committee's budget and ensured actions were performed within the Authority's Financial Regulations and the guidance contained in the Grants procedure;
- (2) The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims and strategic priorities of the Council.

43. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee heard oral representations from the following individuals:

- 1) Heath House, Princes Mews, Royston
 - a) Mr Des O'Connell (Objector)
- 2) Meridian Works, Barkway Road, Royston
 - a) Mr Don Proctor (Applicant's Representative)
- 3) 2 High Street, Barley
 - a) Mr Malcolm Brown (Objector)
 - b) Mr G. Stacey (Applicant) – written statement submitted

Details of these representations can be found at Minute 36 above.

RESOLVED: To determine the applications as set out in the report of the Head of Planning & Building Control as submitted to the Committee in the following schedule:

SCHEDULE

Reference Number	Description of Development and location	Decision
06/00555/1	Heath House, Princes Mews, Royston Erection of 56 dwellings comprising 4 x 1 bedroom units and 52 x 2 bedroom units in two and half and three and a half storey buildings (including use of roof space); 56 basement (largely underground) car parking spaces and associated infrastructure following demolition of existing office building.	DEFERRED (see (a) below)
06/01112/1CAC	Heath House, Princes Mews, Royston Demolition of Heath House office building.	DEFERRED (see (b) below)
06/01087/1	Meridian Works, Barkway Road, Royston Outline Application: Redevelopment of site for residential purposes (all matters reserved).	REFUSED (as per report)
06/01432/1	Earls Wood Cottage, Barkway Two storey detached dwelling house and detached triple garage and car port following demolition of existing dwelling (as variation of application number 06/00235/1 granted 31/05/2006)	GRANTED (as per report)
06/01015/1HH	2 High Street, Barley Two storey and single storey rear extension following removal of shed; re-erection of shed in rear garden and provision of additional parking spaces.	DEFERRED (see (c) below)
06/00224/1HH	Thatchers Cottage, Jacksons Lane, Reed Single storey side extension incorporating conservatory and residential annexe.	See (d) below

- (a) **RESOLVED:** That, with regard to planning application reference 06/00555/1, determination of the application be **DEFERRED** until the meeting of the Committee to be held on 4 October 2006 to allow officers to undertake an assessment of the effect that shadowing from the proposed buildings would have on surrounding buildings, together with a review of the internal design and layout of car park with particular reference to the access/exit point, and reduction of the height of the three and a half storey block through the removal of one storey.

- (b) **RESOLVED:** That, with regard to conservation area consent application reference 06/01112/1CAC, determination of the application be **DEFERRED** until the meeting of the Committee to be held on 4 October 2006, in line with the associated planning application reference 06/00555/1.
- (c) **RESOLVED:** That, whilst the Committee have no objection to the design of the extension, determination of the application be **DEFERRED** for resolution of the issue of the relocation of the existing garden shed. In light of the Committee's support overcoming the Parish Council's objections to the application, the Committee delegated the authority to determine the application to the Planning Control and Conservation Manager.
- (d) **RESOLVED:** That the details of materials used pursuant to condition no. 3 of planning permission reference 06/00224/1HH be approved and the condition be discharged.

The Committee further expressed their displeasure that the materials had not been brought before Committee for approval prior to use, as requested when the planning permission was granted, and requested that an informative to this effect be included in the letter to the applicant.

44. PLANNING APPEALS

The Area Planning Officer informed the Committee that no planning appeals had been lodged or determined since the meeting of the Committee held on 12 July 2006.

However, the Area Planning Officer informed the Committee that the following planning appeal, as reported to the Committee at its meeting held on 12 July 2006, had subsequently been withdrawn.

Appellant	Twigden Homes Ltd
Reference number	05/01561/1
Address	Land South of Redwing Rise, Royston
Proposal	Erection of 28 detached, semi-detached and terraced dwelling houses and 4 flats with garaging and car parking spaces, construction of roads, landscaping, provision of neighbourhood play area and ancillary works.

The meeting closed at 10.23 p.m.

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Chairman

Operations Undertaken in the Royston Area by Terra Eco Systems – Summer 2006

Operation 1

Location:	New Farm (due north of Royston)
Product:	Digested cake
Stockpiling:	30 May 2006 – 5 June 2006 (not at weekend). Westerly wind.
Spreading:	22 July 2006 – 24 July 2006 including weekend
Notes:	<p>Started Field P about 10:00 hrs with wind in south east. Spreader broke down at 13:45 hrs. Heavy disk/tine cultivator was always close behind the spreader.</p> <p>Restarted Sunday at approx. 08:00 hrs due to wind remaining favourably in south east. Fields Q, R and most of U completed. Finished about 20:00 hrs. Cultivator continued to stay close behind.</p> <p>Completed Field U and Y on Monday by about 11:00 hrs. Cleaned down and left farm by mid-day. Wind moved slightly more to east south east.</p> <p>Odour Control Spray (OCS) was used on the spreader throughout the spreading operation.</p> <p>The decision to work over Sunday was based entirely on a favourable wind direction forecast. The extra costs were justified in keeping any potential odour problems to Royston at zero.</p>

Operation 2

Location:	Hatchpen Farm (due south of Royston)
Product:	Terra Lime Cake
Stockpiling:	8 May 2006 – 16 May 2006 (south to south westerly wind)
Spreading:	4 August 2006 – 5 August 2006
Notes:	Odour Control Spray (OCS) used on spreader. Farmer cultivated immediately behind the spreader. North to north westerly wind.

North Hertfordshire District Council's Environmental Health Officers and South Cambridgeshire District Council's Environmental Health Officers had been kept informed of all operations. They received formal "notification" giving details of site location etc. This was followed up by a telephone call prior to commencement of operations and also on completion. No complaints were received from either Council in relation to the operations.

North Hertfordshire District Council's Environmental Health Officers had been in touch with regard to odour complaints in Royston, but these had not been associated with Terra Eco System's operations.