

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HITCHIN COMMITTEE

**Meeting held at Hitchin Town Hall, Brand Street, Hitchin,
on 6 March 2007 at 7.30p.m.**

MINUTES

PRESENT: *Councillors: Derek Sheard (Chairman), Paul Clark, Joan Kirby, Lawrence Oliver, Deepak Sangha, R. Shakespeare-Smith, R.A.C. Thake and Sarah Wren.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Mary Caldwell – Planning Control and Conservation Manager
Graham Haerle- Principal Planning Officer,
Liz Marten – Principal Conservation Officer,
Margaret Bracey - Community Development Officer,
Nigel Schofield – Committee Administrator.*

103. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Derek Sheard advised everyone that the Chairman Councillor Judi Billing had tendered her apologies and that he would be Chairman for this meeting .

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed the speakers at Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation

The Chairman welcomed the speaker at Agenda Item 7 – Planning Applications.

104. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Judi Billing, David Billing, Alison Ashley, Bernard Lovewell and Martin Stears.

105. MINUTES – 23 January 2007

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2007 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman subject to the confirmation that a petition objecting to the demolition of 89 Walsworth Road, Hitchin had been accepted by the Chairman and passed to the Planning Control and Conservation Manager.

MINUTE 100 (3)

The Chairman confirmed that Cabinet at its meeting held on 30 January 2007 (Minute 157 5(d) and 6 refers) had resolved to allocate the sum of £4666 from central resources to continue the subsidy of the Hitchin Market Stall Rent scheme until 17 March 2007.

106. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Agenda Item 5 – Triangle Festival

Councillor Deepak Sangha declared a personal interest in that an immediate member of his family was a Triangle Festival 2007 Committee Member and that he would remain in the room for this item and reserved the right to speak.

Agenda Item 5 – Hitchin Transport Vision

Councillor Paul Clark declared a personal interest as a member of the Transport Vision Group and that he would remain in the room for this item and reserved the right to speak.

Agenda Item 9 – Champion News

Councillor Paul Clark declared a personal interest as he was a coach at Hitchin Rugby Club and that he would remain in the room for this item and reserved the right to speak.

Councillors R.A.C. Thake, Deepak Sangha and Lawrence Oliver declared personal interests as NHDC representatives to the Hitchin Rugby Club Management Committee and that they would remain in the room for this item and reserved the right to speak.

107. HITCHIN TRANSPORT VISION GROUP

The Chairman of the Visioning Transport Group (VTG) thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Hitchin Committee on the findings of the group and wished to place on record appreciation of the support provided by the Hitchin Community Development Officer and the NHDC Transport Officer.

The VTG wanted to create a more people friendly environment in Hitchin and make the historic core of the town centre a safe and attractive place for people to shop, work and spend leisure time. Another objective was the development of 'joined up' local public transport, coordinated service timing with specific links from the rail station to the town centre.

The VTG had identified three zones for consideration with regard to transport issues i.e. 1. Historic Core, 2.The Surrounding Ring and 3.The Outer Ring.

The VTG believed that the historic core should be a car free zone, with access for residents retained and specific periods for entry by goods vehicles. The High Street should be made into a flat paved area for pedestrians and that cycling should be encouraged by the provision of lockers and racks at for example Biggin Lane and Bancroft. The VTG considered that the North Hertfordshire Cycling Strategy should be adopted by Herts County Council and that the strategy should be mandatory for every development and road scheme and also recommended that all footways must be people friendly, with flat and smooth surfaces

The surrounding ring was under pressure from vehicles passing through en route to other destinations which were of no benefit to Hitchin. To achieve a solution the proposal would be to close Paynes Park, Brand Street and the part of Bancroft between Hermitage Road and High Street to traffic except for taxis and buses. To allow this closure Old Park Road should be reinstated to two way traffic with recognition of the access to Waitrose, West Hill and Lairage Car Park as a specific problem for resolution. The VTG wished to promote a central interchange for buses in the town centre, accurate timing indicators at bus stops, bus priority at traffic lights and travel information boards in the high street. Walking routes between the town centre and railway station and the provision of signs indicating the route to the town centre – there were no signs at the moment.

The VGT had agreed that the most pressing issue in the Outer Area was the urgent provision of a viable and alternative access road to Hitchin's Industrial Area with the most logical route being a link to Stoffold Road. The VTG also considered that it would be appropriate for employers to draw up travel plans and thus improve everyone's capability to walk or cycle to work. The VTG also proposed that NHDC and HCC should investigate the viability of car-sharing schemes, and an increase in Controlled Parking Zones in residential areas. One of the more important long term 'needs' was the provision of a route around Hitchin to remove motor vehicles, vans and HGVs away from Hitchin Town centre as the expected expansion of Luton Airport would create much more traffic than currently passing through Hitchin. The actual route of a bypass would be subject to much discussion and cost analysis and review of many parameters.

The VTG were generally supportive of 'road pricing', but not to be seen as penalising local traffic combined with the use of Bio – Fuels as consistent with Hitchin's role as a Fairtrade town.

The Chairman thanked the Hitchin Visioning Transport Group for the very informative presentation and the Committee expressed its strong support for many of the issues raised by the VTG with a request that the group should look at the feasibility of providing a Hitchin bypass on a north – south routing or southern routing.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representative from the Hitchin Transport Vision Group be thanked for the presentation;

- (2) That the Hitchin Committee supported and endorsed the proposals made by the Hitchin Transport Vision Group;
- (3) That the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport be requested to discuss with officers the proposals made by the Hitchin Vision Transport Group and report back to a meeting of the Hitchin Committee in September or October 2007 with recommendations on the way forward for the issues raised in the presentation;
- (4) That the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport be requested with NHDC officers to enter into discussions with other appropriate agencies (e.g. HCC, Herts Highways) to consider the proposals made by the Hitchin Vision Transport Group;
- (5) That the Hitchin Transport Vision Group be requested to take note of the concerns of the Hitchin Committee concerning the possibility of a Southern Bypass and/or a North-South Basis in making future considerations for transport and travel issues in Hitchin;

108. RHYTHMS OF THE WORLD FESTIVAL 2006 AND 2007

The two representatives from the Rhythms of the World Festival Committee thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and expressed the gratitude of all concerned for the support and financial grant from the Hitchin Committee for 2006 and hopefully for 2007. The representatives referred to the report that would be presented at Agenda Item 6 and in particular recommendation 9.5. and the proposal for an additional retention of £1,500 on top of the regular 'damage bond' of £1,000. Reference was made to delays encountered in meeting with NHDC officers to discuss the 2007 event until the legal officers at NHDC had made a decision as any prosecution concerning breaches of any licensing conditions. A potential period of 12 months could pass before officers had to decide on a prosecution and the ROTW committee considered that this potential for delay would have a marked effect on the organisation of any annual event of cultural and/or community significance.

The ROTW Committee urged the Hitchin Committee to resolve only to hold back a £1000 damage bond and not agree to the officer recommendation of an additional £1,500. Also, that a defined time limit should be placed on both parties: for example three months after the event, in which a decision on a breach of a licensing condition could be made.

The Chairman thanked the two representatives for their presentation, comments and suggestions and proposed to the Committee that it would be best to delay any comments on the presentation until the officers report had been presented at Agenda Item 6.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representatives from the Rhythms of the World Festival Committee be thanked for the presentation;
- (2) That the concerns of the ROTW Committee concerning the retention of monies from the proposed grant of £10,000 be noted;
- (3) That the request for an amendment to the NHDC Statement of Licensing Policy concerning the length of time allowed for any possible prosecution after each annual event be noted.

109. THE TRIANGLE FESTIVAL 2007

The representatives from the Triangle Festival Committee thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and provided a brief review of the successful event held in 2006. Thanks was also given for the financial support provided by the Hitchin Committee to the 2006 festival and that without grant funding the festival would not have taken place.

The Committee noted that the 2007 Festival would be held on the 30 June and 1 July and would be larger and build on the success of the 2006 Festival. The emphasis would be on having a 'green' festival, bring all the Triangle communities together and on the Sunday there would be much emphasis on visitor participation with local artists workshops and provide a sound stage for aspiring bands under 18 years of age. The Saturday events would include two professional bands with a possible four musical events held in Hitchin Town Hall held as fund raising events for the festival

The representatives would seek sponsorship from local companies and local groups would be invited to clear litter in exchange for a charitable bucket collection, however this would still leave a considerable funding sought from other bodies. With this in mind the Chairman proposed that a formal grant application should be presented to the Hitchin at its next meeting to be held on 17 April 2007.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representatives from the representative of the Triangle Festival be thanked for the presentation;
- (2) That the representatives from the Triangle Festival be requested to enter into discussions with the Hitchin Community Development Officer for the presentation of a grant application to the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee to be held on 17 April 2007.

110. RHYTHMS OF THE WORLD FESTIVAL 2006 AND 2007

The Community Development Officer for Hitchin presented the report of the Strategic Director of Customer Services and drew the Committees attention to Paragraph 4 which provided a summary of the debrief meeting following the 2006 event and suggestions for the future against each item of concern. Litter and refuse collection remained a significant problem and several breaches of licensing conditions were observed by officers. Instances of illegal street trading had been removed and Hertfordshire Police had raised their concerns on instances of disorder during the 2006 Festival particularly on Windmill Hill.

The Committee noted that the ROTW 2007 Committee would look at the suggestions and issues raised at Paragraph 4 and were working with officers to ensure that the 2007 event would be held in a safe a manner as possible. It was also noted that Hitchin had a limited capacity to accommodate large numbers of visitors and with this in mind the ROTW would market the 2007 event as a multi-cultural and family event rather than a major music festival.

The Committee expressed its unanimous support for the ROTW 2007 Festival and the Chairman invited approval of the recommendations and items 9.1 to 9.4 were agreed subject to clarification of 'car parking' at Butts Close.

The Committee were minded at item 9.4 'in principle' to grant £10,000 from the Hitchin Discretionary Budget for 2007-2008, however, there ensued a strong debate on the merits or otherwise of two sums of retention (as per item 9.5) , or one, or none at all. It was eventually decided to continue with a £1,000 damage bond which would be held back from the sum of grant 'in principle' of £10,000.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Rhythms of the World Festival 2006 Committee be thanked for the successful event held last July.
- (2) That the Hitchin Committee note the results of the debrief, conclusions and suggestions for the future as identified at Paragraph 4;
- (3) That the Hitchin Committee supports the proposal to use Butts Close as an overflow car park in 2007 subject to the agreement of local organisations with an interest in the land;
- (4) That the Hitchin Committee supports 'in principle' the award of a grant of £10,000 from the Hitchin Discretionary Budget for 2007-2008;

- (5) That the Hitchin Committee agreed to the proposal of a retention sum of £1,000 to be held back as a 'damage bond';
- (6) The Hitchin Committee considered that it would be appropriate to review the NHDC Statement of Licensing Policy in order to make a special provision for annual events of a particular cultural or community significance for the early release of departmental feedback and legal department's opinion.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That Cabinet be requested to consider an amendment to the NHDC Statement of Licensing Policy where the period of departmental feedback and legal department's opinion regarding any possible prosecution to the organisers of an annual cultural and community event be defined as a period of three months after the event and if appropriate recommend this amendment to Council.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To ensure the support of the Hitchin Committee for the continuation of the Rhythms of the World Festival in 2007.

111. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Prior to the consideration of the planning application the Chairman announced that this would be the last meeting of the Hitchin Committee attended by Graham Haerle in his role as the Principal Planning Officer for the Hitchin Area. The Chairman read out a prepared statement concerning Mr Haerle's 30 year career at NHDC and the contribution by this officer to planning control and conservation management in Hitchin and North Hertfordshire.

RESOLVED: That a vote of thanks be recorded in respect of the long and meritorious service to NHDC by Mr Haerle on his retirement as a Principal Planning Officer together with immense gratitude for the planning guidance he had provided to the Hitchin Committee.

The Committee heard an oral presentation as follows:

Application Ref. 06/02558/1 – 89 Walsworth Road, Hitchin.

Mr J. Harvey spoke as an objector.

Councillor Paul Clark requested that a recorded vote be taken on the substantive motion indicated at Paragraph 5 of the report of the Planning Control and Conservation Manager.

Voting:

For: Councillors Sarah Wren, Ray Shakespeare-Smith, R.A.C. Thake and Derek Sheard = 4.

Against: Councillors Joan Kirby, Paul Clark and Lawrence Oliver = 3.

Abstention: Councillor Deepak Sangha = 1.

RESOLVED to determine the planning applications as set out in the report of the Head of Planning and Building control and as indicated in the following schedule:

SCHEDULE

Reference Number	Description of Development and Location	Decision
06/02558/1	89 Walsworth Road, Hitchin. Residential development comprising nine 3 bedroom dwellings and two 2 bedroom dwellings, new vehicular access and ancillary works, following demolition of existing buildings.	Conditional Permission (see (a)below)

- (a) That with regard to planning application reference 06/02558/1 permission be **GRANTED** as per the conditions set out in the report of the Planning Control and Conservation Manager and the following additional condition:

15. No development or demolition shall take place within the proposed development site before the applicant, agent or successor in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the planning authority. This condition will not be discharged before the planning authority has received and approved an archaeological report of the archaeological investigations.

Reason: The site lies within an area of known archaeological interest and any archaeological remains therein should be retrieved or recorded before they are damaged or destroyed due to the development hereby permitted.

111. **PLANNING APPEALS - UPDATE**

The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that two appeals had been lodged and one appeal had been determined since the meeting of this Committee held on 23 January 2007.

Appellant Weston Homes plc
Address Land off Walsworth Road (adjacent to B & Q Store and rear of 59-69 Dacre Road) Hitchin.

Description: 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). (Amended by plans received 21.12.06, 09.01.07 and 19.01.07).
Ref. 06/02607/1

Procedure: Public enquiry.

Appellant Stephen Howard Homes
Address Land to the rear of and including 134 to 154 evens, Grove Road, Hitchin, SG4.

Description: 2 storey and part 3,4 and 5 storey development to provide 39 one and 38 two bed roomed flats; 4 two, 6 three and 10 four bed roomed houses (total 97); 95 basement and 32 surface level garage/parking spaces. New vehicular and pedestrian access adjacent River Purwell; landscaping and ancillary works. (as amended by plans received 13.09.06, 16.10.06 and 30.10.06).
Ref. 06/01197/1

Procedure: Public enquiry.
The Committee noted that the highway reason for refusal would not be pursued as part of the Council's appeal evidence.

Appellant; Mr M.A.A. Ashik.
Address: 14 Redhill Road, Hitchin, SG5 2NJ
Description: Extension of trading hours to include 12 noon – 10 p.m. on Sundays.
Ref. 06/00983/1

Decision: Appeal DISMISSED on 23 January 2007.
Committee/ Delegated.
Delegated:

112. CHAMPION NEWS

The Community Development Officer (CDO) provided a summary of her activities since the last meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 23 January 2007 and confirmed that Italian Alder trees had been planted in Butts Close and the installation of an irrigation at Hitchin Rugby Club had been completed.

Reference was made to the allotment sites in Hitchin and that there was currently a waiting list for plots. The Committee requested that officers made investigations as to the acquisition of land suitable for allotment cultivation in order to meet demand and promote a healthy, active and rewarding lifestyle.

The Committee expressed their extreme disappointment at the lack of progress in the implementation of Controlled Parking zones in The Avenue and Triangle Area as well as the lack of any response from the NHDC/NHHP liaison officer concerning traffic management in Ickleford Road. The CDO advised the Chairman that the NHDC/NHHP liaison officer would make the necessary arrangements for the traffic management issues raised by the residents of Ickleford Road to be an agenda item at the next meeting of the JMP to be held on 23 April.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport advised the Chairman that he would report back to the next meeting of the Hitchin Committee with a detailed programme of work for these CPZs.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided by the Community Development Officer on activities since the last meeting of the Hitchin Committee held on 23 January 2007 be noted;
- (2) That the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport be requested to provide via the next edition of Champion News (17 April 2007) a detailed programme of work for the consultation and implementation of Controlled Parking Zone/s in The Avenue and Triangle Area of Hitchin;
- (3) That the Planning Control and Conservation Manager be requested to advise the Local Development Framework Manager of the Hitchin Committee's concern over the lack of new allotment plots in Hitchin;
- (4) That the Local Development Framework Manager be requested to provide via the next edition of Champion News (17 April 2007) an assessment of the provision for new land to be allocated for allotment gardening in Hitchin and North Hertfordshire.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

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

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

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

RESOLVED: That the expenditure, allocations, and balance of the current 2006-2007 Development Budget, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted;

REASON FOR DECISION:

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

114. GRANT APPLICATION – SRI GURU SINGH SABHA GURDWARA

RESOLVED: That a grant of £1,000 be awarded 'in principle' from the 2007-2008 Hitchin Discretionary Budget as a contribution towards costs associated with the Vaisakhi Procession on 14 April 2007 e.g. safety, highways, insurance and effective traffic management.

115. HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE MANAGER – UPDATE

The Hitchin Town Manager provided a brief summary of his activities since the last meeting and confirmed that he would make a presentation to the April meeting of the Hitchin Committee which would *inter alia* report on Town Centre Partnerships.

RESOLVED: That the information provided by the Hitchin Town Centre Manager be noted.

The meeting closed at 10.31 p.m.

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Chairman