

Little Hadham Parish Council

Minutes of the thirty-ninth meeting of the Little Hadham Parish Council **Planning Committee** (2007–2011 Session) held on Tuesday 5th April 2011 at 8:00 pm in the Village Hall, Little Hadham.

Present:

Mrs C Piccolo	Chairman
Mr R Gregory)
Mr A Morris) Councillors
Mr J Purvis)
Mrs M Wilkinson)
Mr G Williamson)

Mr B Evans – Clerk, and 13 members of the public.

The meeting was preceded by a presentation from Mr Michael Hurford from Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation concerning new homes to be built near the Bishop's Stortford northern bypass. [Appendix 1].

40.1 Democratic 10 minutes.

There were no questions or comments.

40.2 Absent Cllr Forgham [holiday].

40.3 Declarations of interest. Cllr Williamson declared a prejudicial interest in item 40.9.2 – planning application for The Moores – as he lived next door. Cllr Williamson left the room when this was discussed.

40.4 Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 1st March 2011 were agreed and signed as a true record.

40.5 Matters arising from the minutes.

40.5.1 Possible new access road at Church End Farm. Cllr Gregory said there had been no new developments. The matter need not be included on the agenda in future.

40.6 Local Development Framework update. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said development of the LDF continued and that the Council had submitted a response to the consultation.

40.7 Consultation on planning applications. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that EHC wanted to save printing and postage costs by making planning applications available online and not sending copies to councils. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that she preferred to take a copy of the plans with her when making a site visit. When the plans were printed on A4 paper they were too small to read. If printed over 8 sheets of A4 paper they were very difficult to manage. Although she was aware of the need to keep down costs she proposed that the Council ask EHC to continue sending the printed versions of the applications. Agreed.

Action
Clerk

40.8 New homes planned for land south of the Bishop's Stortford northern bypass. Cllr Gregory said that the Council should hear the views of East Herts Council on the subject. It was agreed that Cllr Mrs Piccolo would invite Head of Environmental Planning – Bryan Thomsett – to the next meeting.

Action
CP

40.9 Planning applications considered by the Council

40.9.1 0271/11 Florence Cottage, The Ford. Demolition and erection of a replacement dwelling. Considered by Cllr Mrs Piccolo and Cllr Williamson. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that Cllr Williamson had no objection. However, she was of the view that a period house in a conservation area should be preserved. Despite this, she knew that most councillors did not agree with her so she proposed that there be no objection. Agreed. Cllr Mrs Piccolo said that a number of residents, who wished to remain unnamed, had

asked the Council to convey their views to EHC and she presented a draft of a letter. Cllr Gregory said that the letter should show more clearly that the views expressed were not those of the Council. It was agreed that he would edit the letter before Cllr Mrs Piccolo emailed it to the planning office.

- 40.9.2** 0490/11 The Moores, Ford Hill. Construction of a raised platform - amended scheme. Considered by Cllr Mrs Piccolo and Cllr Mrs Wilkinson. Cllr Mrs Piccolo proposed there be no objection. Agreed.
- 40.9.3** 0464/11 4 Hadham Hall. Alteration to vent shaft and extension to existing step access to cellar. Considered by Cllr Mrs Piccolo and Cllr Gregory. Cllr Gregory proposed there be no objection. Agreed.
- 40.9.4** 0526/11 4 South Cottages, The Ford. Side conservatory. Considered by Cllr Mrs Piccolo and Cllr Williamson. Cllr Mrs Piccolo proposed there be no objection. Agreed.
- 40.10 Planning decisions received from EHC**
- 40.10.1** 0082/11 The Garage, Stortford Road. Outline planning permission for demolition of existing building and erection of two detached buildings. Withdrawn.
- 40.11 Notice of appeal.** 2090/10 The Chapel Hall, Chapel Lane. Change of use of chapel hall to form a two bedroom residential dwelling.
- 40.12 Appeal decision.** 1720/11 Bushes Croft, Cradle End. Erection of double garage and boot room/WC and storage at first floor. Appeal allowed.
- 40.13 Date of next meeting – Tuesday 3rd May 2011.**
- 40.14 The Chairman closed the meeting to the Public and the Press at 8:45 p.m.**

Appendix 1 Presentation by Mr Michael Hurford from Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation

The Areas of Special Restraint

It is unfortunately true that very few people in Bishop's Stortford are aware that the District Council propose to permit the building of at least 3,000 houses on what are called in the District Plan the Areas of Special Restraint or, more usually, the ASRs. The purpose of this paper is to describe where they are, recount the history of their selection as a development site and to describe the disaster it would be for the town if this proposal is permitted.

They run from the Tesco roundabout to near the old Red, White and Blue pub, bounded to the north by the by-pass and to the south, going east by Hadham Road, Dane O'Coys Road, Foxdells lane and Rye Street. This is the last part of the Town's periphery so far undeveloped and consists of the most attractive part of it. It is an undulating mixture of arable, pasture and woodland. There are good footpaths and Dane O'Coys road is almost traffic free, making it suitable for families walking and cycling. As it abuts the cricket ground and tennis courts in Cricket Field Lane it gives immediate access to the countryside from the North and North West of the Town.

Between 1981 and 1983 the Eyre Enquiry into the expansion of Stansted Airport calculated the number of so called airport related houses that would be needed for the significant expansion that was later granted. The County Council saw the ASRs as part of Hertfordshire's contribution to these houses in addition to the peripheral development along the new western by-pass running from the Tesco roundabout to Spellbrook.

These calculations proved to be wildly inaccurate as the predominately low cost airlines using Stansted and much technological development meant that the number of staff - and therefore houses - was very much smaller than had been thought necessary.

This reduction was reinforced by Stansted's changed recruitment policy, first in North London then in Eastern Europe. BAA has said that they need no more airport related housing. However, EHDC still has an obligation in the District Plan to build another 692 airport related houses on the ASRs. This is based on an abstruse calculation that no one now understands and is in defiance of BAA's statement. It should be removed from the Local Development Framework (LDF)

The ASR's classification as a development site was made in 1986/7. Since then Stortford has changed dramatically, bearing the brunt of the District's housing and almost all of the airport related housing. Three large peripheral estates have been built at Bishop's Park, College Fields and St Michael's Mead, totalling about 2,000 houses. It is instructive to see the size of these estates and note that together they are but two thirds of what is intended for the ASRs. It is also salutary to see them on Sundays when they are, as someone said, just car parks with houses on. In addition the large hospital site, Jackson Square and other Town Centre developments have been completed and the Railway Goods Yard and Charringtons, together with many other proposed housing sites shown in the District Plan, loom in the future.

No attempt seems to have been made to check the assumptions on which the original housing designation was based, despite this being a normal part of good planning practice. What has happened is that the ASR's have become ossified in the planning process and march on year by year in successive District Plans, and now the current LDF.

Although housing allocations have been part of a top down system over which EHDC have had little control, it remains true that retaining the ASRs in past District Plans and now the proposed LDF have permitted them to be allocated, as part of the 5 year housing reserve, against the District's allocation. This again shows how Stortford is unfairly treated. The Civic Federation have long argued that the optimum population for Bishop's Stortford is 40,000. Happily, we are supported by the Eastern Region who, in their Regional Scale Settlement Study(Section 9.5.3), say that the town has reached its natural capacity.

In 2005 the District Council engaged consultants to plan a settlement on the ASRs of about 3000 houses. One section of their report is so damning that it has been quoted in full (5.3.1 Key Issues)

There are two fundamental conclusions arising out of the appraisal of the town and area for growth that need special emphasis.

First, the issues and constraints presented by the existing highway network in Bishop's Stortford are so significant that this study must conclude that development should not go forward without current problems being resolved. As recommended by this study, a town-wide transport study of Bishop's Stortford is to be undertaken in the near future. The result of the town-wide study should be a town-wide transport movement and parking strategy that is integrated with a study with a strategy for the improvement of the public realm to the benefit of pedestrians and cyclists.

Secondly, the question of access to the area for growth from the A120 remains unresolved. The County Council has stated that access to the site from the A120 is a "last resort" due to the strategic aim of dualling the route. A knock-on from this position is that any proposals that do not use the A120 will put greater strain on the network within Bishop's Stortford and so add further complexities to resolving the problems that need to be resolved prior to going forward with development.

The Transport Study mentioned was commissioned by the District and County Councils with a specific request in the terms of reference to provide a solution to the problems mentioned by the consultants. This was not done, the matter being left to whoever developed the site. The only specific recommendation was for the establishment of a Park and Ride system on the ASRs. Although the study recognised the serious congestion problem, the solution was far greater use of public transport, cycles and walking. Unfortunately, recommendations such as these are mostly ignored. No social change has ever been achieved without legislation. For example, the deleterious effects of smoking, lead in petrol and stubble burning were well known but nothing happened until there was compulsion. Their other suggestion was to complete the south eastern bypass but there is little hope of that.

The fact that park and ride in a town of the size of Bishop's Stortford would be uneconomic was ignored. The most significant fact that the study did reveal was that it would take 23 minutes for a car to leave the ASR village onto the Hadham Road. The only remedy was to create an exit, via a roundabout, onto the northern by-pass. However, the Highways Department was very unhappy with this as it would feed local traffic onto a through route.

These almost insuperable deficiencies are compounded by two other factors; first, that when the present recession is over Stansted will start to expand to the new limit of 35 million passengers a year, increasing traffic from the west using the by-pass; secondly, there will be a marked increase in traffic from the nearby Essex villages into Stortford. Two large estates, one of 650 houses in Stansted and another of 800 houses in Takeley are in the process of construction.

Although congestion remains the major issue, an estate of this size would have effects on the Town's infrastructure, in particular education, medicine and parking. As well, the Environment Agency produced in 2006 a Catchment Abstraction Management survey. The entry for the Upper Stort said :

This river was assessed as "over-abstracted " and was found to have insufficient flows to meet the environmental need at all times, even at times of high flows. In order to preserve the ecological habitats no further licenses for consumption purposes will be granted in this catchment.

The final question about developing the ASRs is, is it a sustainable development. Much rubbish is talked about sustainability, usually by developers. It does not mean that estates are built near to a bus stop or a primary school or a doctor's surgery; this is just moderately intelligent planning. To get to the correct definition it is necessary to go back to the source of the concept of sustainability which was the UN commission chaired by the Norwegian Prime Minister

Gro Harlem Brundtland in the 1980's. This said that sustainable development is that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs; in more simple terms it means that we should not destroy something which future generations would find valuable.

Some environmentalists go further by saying that sustainable development is an oxymoron as all development must entail environmental degradation. Nevertheless, it is clear that to destroy such an area of agricultural diversity and recreational value would clearly be unsustainable.

The disastrous consequences of building on the ASRs on Bishop's Stortford should by now be clear. But there will be other sufferers. The nearby villages of Much and Little Hadham, Albury, Stansted, Birchanger and Takeley will also be faced with their centre for shopping, the railway station, amenities and other recreational, and most importantly employment opportunities, will be blighted by a semi-permanent traffic jam.

It is now time for reality to be faced. The District Council must abandon this ridiculous proposal which everyone in the Town knows would destroy all those things which people think are valuable about their Town. The ASRs must be re-defined as Green Belt land so that the most valuable part of the Town's periphery is preserved for ever.