

Little Hadham Parish Council

Minutes of the twenty-first meeting of the Little Hadham Parish Council **Planning Committee** (2007 – 2011 Session) held on Tuesday 5th May 2009 at 8:05 pm in the Village Hall, Little Hadham.

Present:

Mr A Morris	Chairman
Mr M Fairchild)
Mr J Purvis)
Mrs C Piccolo) Councillors
Mr T Skidmore)
Mr G Williamson)

Mr B Evans – Clerk, and 10 members of the public.

21.1 Democratic 10 minutes.

There were no questions or comments.

21.2 Absent Cllr Mrs Wilkinson.

21.3 Declarations of interest. Cllr Williamson declared a prejudicial interest in Ashdene as the owner was a friend. Cllr Williamson left the meeting when this was discussed.

21.4 Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 7th April 2009 were agreed and signed as a true record.

21.5 Matters arising

21.5.1 Informal meeting with members of the EHC Development Control Committee and planning officers. Cllr Fairchild summarised the minutes of the meeting [Appendix 1].

21.6 Planning applications considered by the Council

21.6.1 0461/09 Sunfield, Bromley Lane, Wellpond Green. Demolition of existing barn and re-erection to provide living accommodation. Considered by Cllr Morris and Cllr Purvis. Cllr Morris proposed there be no objection. Agreed.

21.6.2 0384/09 Ashdene, The Ford. Proposed garden wall. Considered by Cllr Morris and Cllr Skidmore. Cllr Morris said that the application replaced an application that was refused on the grounds that the gate, by reason of its design and length, was out of keeping with the conservation area and that the removal of the hedgerow would be detrimental to the visual amenity of the area. Cllr Morris said that he thought the new lower wall and gate were acceptable. However he realised that many councillors did not agree so he proposed that the Council object on the grounds: 1. The height and design of the wall and gate are not in keeping with other boundaries in the area. This is necessary to preserve the character of the conservation area. 2. Removal of the hedge would alter the rural setting. Agreed.

21.6.3 0505/09 Chalk Cottage, Stortford Road. Alteration of external openings in existing rear kitchen projection. Considered by Cllr Morris and Cllr Skidmore. Cllr Morris proposed there be no objection. Agreed.

21.7 Planning decisions received from EHC – none

21.8 Notification of appeal

0083/09 Ashdene, The Ford. 1.5 m front garden wall and 1.7 m gate. Considered by Cllr Morris and Cllr Skidmore. Cllr Morris proposed that the Council write to reaffirm its objection and to note some errors in the appeal statement: the application is for a 1.8m wall not 1.51m as in the appeal [Sections 2.2 and 3.8.2]; Section 3.5, says the gate will be decreased in width in the new plans, when it is in fact increased in width by 1 metre (from 3.5m); Section 3.6 says the reduced width will make it more difficult to manoeuvre to the garage, when in fact it would make it easier. Agreed.

21.9 Date of next meeting – Tuesday 2nd June 2009.**21.10 Chairman closed the meeting to the Public and the Press at 8:27 p.m.**

Appendix 1

Meeting between members of Little Hadham Parish Council and the EHC development control team

Time and Place

7:30 p.m. Wednesday 22nd April 2009 at the EHC offices, Peggs Lane, Hertford.

Present**For Little Hadham Parish Council**

Cllr Mike Fairchild [Chairman]; Cllr Andy Morris; Cllr Carmela Piccolo; Cllr John Purvis; Cllr Tony Skidmore; Cllr Geoff Williamson; Mr Bev Evans [Parish Clerk].

For EHC

Cllr Ralph Gilbert [Chair Development Control Committee]; Mr Kevin Steptoe [Head of Planning and Building Control]; Ms Liz Humby [East DC Team Manager]; Mr John Careford [Senior Planning Policy Officer].

Mr Careford explained the changing planning policies. The Local Plan would be in operation until 2010. The policy team was currently identifying key elements of the plan that would remain until the Local Development Framework was adopted from April 2012. These ‘Saved Policies’ would have to be agreed by the Secretary of State.

The LDF would contain three main documents: 1) Core Strategy – general principles to be adopted by about 2012; 2) Site allocation; 3) Development Control Policy.

There would be consultation of the Core Strategy in spring 2010. The consultation would have four stages: 1) The Issues with possible Options; 2) Preferred Options; 3) Submissions in response to 2; 4) Examination in public. Consultation on the other two documents of the LDF would follow a similar process.

Mr Careford expected that most of the Local Plan would be retained in the Saved Policies– including the various Categories of village. The notion of Categories was unique to EHC but other districts had something similar.

The policies in the LDF would have to consider local views as well as the Regional Plan and National Planning Guidance. The Regional Plan was subject to a challenge in the high court by HCC among others. A major feature of the Regional Plan was the need for 12,000 new homes in East Herts for 20 years from 2001 to 2021, equivalent to 660 pa from 2006. A number of homes had already been built or land allocated leaving 3,239 to be planned by 2021.

Mr Careford said that the spring 2010 consultation would consider the broad options. Various options for where to site the extra homes had been suggested but no decisions had been made.

Cllr Fairchild said residents were concerned about how extra housing might affect the atmosphere of a community. An estate proposed by a local landowner had been rejected by the residents on this basis.

Mr Careford said the current ‘call for sites’ was sensible though not compulsory. Many of the sites proposed would be rejected and only a few would be open to consultation. It was possible that sites that were eventually proposed for development in the LDF would not be proposed in the call for sites.

The government rules insisted that development sites had to be identified and agreed for 5 years ahead. Welwyn and Hatfield had released their Issues and Options document if people wished to see an example.

Ms Humby said that current planning decisions were based on the Local Plan. Parish Councils should relate any objections to specific policies in the Local Plan.

Cllr Gilbert said that many decisions were subjective and the Development Control Committee might take a different view to the planning officers. 90% of decisions were delegated to the planning officers. New regulations would allow more development without planning consent, i.e. more permitted development – even in conservation areas. There was pressure to make decisions within 8 weeks of an application. The committee considered: schemes with 10 or more homes; schemes involving more than 1000m² of development; schemes that were contrary to the Local Plan but which the planning officers thought had merit. An EHC councillor, usually the ward councillor, could contact Cllr Gilbert and ask that the committee consider a specific planning application. That councillor could talk on the matter at the committee meeting. The councillor would often be alerted by the weight of local opinion from residents and the parish council.

Asked if the planning role of parish councils might increase in the future Mr Steptoe said he foresaw there would be little real change in the powers available to Parish Councils. There had been some small changes to the appeals process.

Cllr Fairchild said there seemed to be increasing numbers of contentious applications and there was a feeling that that Little Hadham’s protected status was being eroded by some recent decisions. Mr Steptoe said that, in his experience, the public generally were more aware of their built environment and wanted to conserve it. Applicants had also become more ambitious in their plans for development with larger schemes coming forward.

The Clerk mentioned the industrial estate at Church End Farm that had resulted from a number of small planning consents. Cllr Skidmore said the Council had asked for a development plan for the area. Mr Steptoe said that development plans, although ideal, were resource intensive. If the Council were able to undertake them– there were a number of other sites that may well have to be given priority.

Cllr Fairchild said that planning enforcement was often not effective. There was an impression that rules were being relaxed. Mr Steptoe said that enforcement policy was currently being considered. Enforcement was often very protracted. If plans were not followed, the planning office had to consider whether the new building would have been granted had it been applied for originally even though this was understandably frustrating to those who follow the rules.

Ms Humby said that there had been no changes in the way planners looked at applications. There was no pressure to push forward developments. 34% of appeals had been allowed from Oct 2008 to Mar 2009. Recommendations by planning officers were agreed, either by herself or by Ms Francesca Hill. The West DC team, to ensure consistency, often checked recommendations by the East team offices. The planning office was not able to involve the Parish Councils in a second round of consultation when it had reached an interim view on proposals. This would be both demanding in terms of resources, but would be unfair if all other parties were also not so invited.

Mr Careford said that meetings of the LDF Panel were open to the public – minutes of meetings were available on the EHC website.

Mr Steptoe said that ways of offering training on planning matters to parish councillors were being considered and he expected to contact council soon.

Cllr Fairchild thanked the EHC members for their time and help to the Council.