

**Minutes of the Ashwell Parish Council meeting  
held on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2019 in the Parish Room**

**Present:** Cllrs Mark White (Chairman), Martin Hoffman (Vice-chairman), Norton Mahy, Graham Lee, David Sims.

The Clerk (Jane Porter) was also in attendance (Deputy Clerk away).

Members of the public: Five parishioners and District Councillor Tom Tyson.  
County Councillor Steve Jarvis had sent his apologies.

**38.** Apologies for absence. Cllr Gemma Allan (away).

**39.** Declarations of Interest. Cllr Martin Hoffman item 49.7 (next door neighbour). Cllr Graham Lee item 49.4 (resident of Ashwell Street).

**40.** Proposal to approve and sign the minutes of the previous meeting, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019.  
It was *resolved* that these be approved and signed.

**41. PARISH AFFAIRS, REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES AND OPEN FORUM**

*Standing Orders suspended to allow members of the public to speak.*

**42. Village hall**/transfer to the Parish Council of the holding (or custodian) trusteeship.  
(*see February Council 2018, minute 98.1 for details*).

The Chairman reported that a response from the solicitor was still awaited.

**43. Items raised by parish councillors.**

*Including any matters on other village groups and local organisations.*

**43.1** Museum. Cllr Martin Hoffman (Chairman of the Museum trustees in his own right) reported that the building works continued to go as planned.

**43.2** Arbury Banks. Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that the aerial data from the Chilterns Beacons of the Past project was still awaited pending work by their volunteer group.

**44. Matters re other authorities and organisations.**

**44.1 North Herts District Council** (NHDC) (District Councillor Tom Tyson).

(i) Emails from Daniel Washington to introduce himself as the new NHDC Transport Officer were noted. District Cllr Tom Tyson reported: (i) Bus shelter in Station Road/he had prompted the NHDC officer re repairs. (ii) Yellow lines/the NHDC parking officer would visit regularly to enforce these with targeted visits outside the school at the start of term in September. (iii) Bin collections/any problems resulting from recent route changes should be reported to him. Residents safety concerns re reversing lorries were noted.

**44.2 Hertfordshire County Council** (HCC)/**Highways** (County Councillor Steve Jarvis)

County Cllr Steve Jarvis had provided updates/reports on the following: (i)Waiting restrictions outside retail outlets were to go ahead in spite of the objections. (ii) Resurfacing to the Back Street footway was scheduled and works in Bacons Yard now rescheduled. (iii) Designs for the West End “give and take” were nearly complete, which should allow progress to resume on the 20mph speed limits. (iv) A speed and volume survey was to be done near Shire End Close in response to residents’ concerns about traffic speeds. (v) The county council was in the process of reviewing its speed management strategy. If things progress as expected this would be likely to make Station Road eligible for a 20mph limit (in addition to areas in which it is currently planned). The new policy was not expected to come into effect until next year, so for the moment work on the planned 20mph limit would continue under the existing policies. (vi) There was nothing further to report on the A505 at present (interim proposals were promised for September).

The following additional Highways matters were reported: (i) Overhanging vegetation in Claybush Road had again been reported to the landowner and Highways; the latter had now carried out works. (ii) The new village entrance sign was awaiting installation by Highways by the Station Road chicane.

(iii) Parishioner’s request for safety improvements at the War Memorial junction particularly for cyclists. It was noted that following a fatality some ten years ago various options had been proposed but Herts Highways regulations re distances and sight lines etc had precluded a mini-roundabout, bollards, etc. It was agreed that the wide area painted white that had been installed to discourage cutting of the corner could be refreshed and raised. It was agreed that all options be discussed more fully at the next Highways liaison meeting. Cllr David Sims reported that dates for this had been proposed.

## 45. Working Groups.

*(Those currently active are listed. Members include volunteer parishioners as well as parish councillors. Offers to join or start new groups welcomed)*

**45.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group** (leader Cllr Graham Lee) Cllr Graham Lee reported that grant forms from the previous phase were to be completed and the consultant would then progress the next phase.

**45.2 Yearbook Group** (leader Cllr Norton Mahy) Cllr Norton Mahy reported that a meeting was scheduled for September to progress the 2020 edition.

**45.3 Local business support** (leader Cllr Graham Lee)

*See 44.2 above re timed parking spaces and 47.1 below re new village map.*

**45.4 Protection of valued trees** (leader Cllr David Sims) Nothing further to report.

## 46. Items raised by parishioners.

**46.1 Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) and the OWL scheme.** A parishioner requested an update on her request for additional NHW signs around the village. It was reported that the police had provided some and suggestions for locations were made. She also requested that the NHW group meetings that used to be held in the village be restarted. It was noted that these had ceased due to lack of attendance but if enough people were interested they could be supported. It was agreed to encourage sign-ups to the police OWL scheme, the online system that had taken over the role of NHW meetings.

**46.2 Dog waste bins.** A parishioner passed on a request from others for additional bins in the village. It was noted that the Parish Council had installed and paid for the maintenance of ten bins. This was a high number in relation to the size of the village, the number of households (and it was believed dogs) so it had been agreed that the additional cost of more bins could not be justified.

*See also 44.2 above re Highways matters.*

---

*Standing orders reinstated from here.*

## 47. Matters of report from previous meetings.

**47.1 New village map.** Cllr Graham Lee reported that the supplier had been briefed re design matters.

## 48. PREMISES MANAGEMENT REPORTS

*(individual parish councillor's responsibilities shown in brackets)*

Updates were received/noted on the following:

**48.1 Cemetery.** Nothing to report.

**48.2 Recreation Ground & Pavilion.** (Responsible: Cllrs Mark White and Gemma Allan)

(i) Installation of a water fountain was being investigated. (ii) Consultation with interested parties re the facilities was ongoing.

*(see also 48.3 below)*

**48.3 Playground.** (Responsible: Cllr Gemma Allan)

(i) Minor works to the equipment were scheduled. (ii) Consultation with interested parties re ideas for new equipment was ongoing.

**48.4 Public Toilets.** (Responsible: Cllr Gemma Allan)

(i) Investigation and costing for new facilities was ongoing.

**48.5 The Springs.** (Responsible: Cllr Martin Hoffman) Cllr Martin Hoffman reported that he had undertaken a routine site visit and in general the area was looking good and obviously being appreciated by many. He had highlighted a few issues with the members of the volunteer working group including:

(i) Hedge along the Springhead boundary. The Parish Council had employed their preferred supplier to do a light 'summer' cut to keep the road visibility as good as possible (nothing too drastic as still in the bird nesting season). As in past years any more serious cut-back would be discussed for action in the winter. (ii) Erosion of banks and silting of the river bed. As emphasised previously there was a need to keep the footfall off the banks and the promontory. The fencing to the zig-zag path had been installed with the intention of blocking access from that side but clearly people were crawling under it. Putting a large pile of prunings to block this off worked well previously and should be reinstated. The amount of silt that was building up in front of the main spring was concerning. This was allowing grass and not just watercress to grow and had

severely encroached on the gravelled area (needed for the ice-age worms and probably the bullhead fish). The Parish Council was taking expert advice on whether some of the silted area needed to be dug out. Higher flow rates would help to clear this but these were obviously dependent on rainfall combined with extraction rights held by the water company. The latest monthly flow rate figures from the Environment Agency were borderline. (iii) Other ground cover vegetation. There was concern that some of the areas intended to be left as dense vegetation (good for birds, prevent erosion, etc) had been cleared. For example, the west bank of the river from the stepping stones to the site boundary was now very exposed, was easily accessible and risked the banks being eroded. (iv) Ash die-back. All continue to monitor for this.

**48.6 Small Gains.** (Responsible: Allotments, Accies sports field and shared car parking area) (Cllr David Sims) Cllr David Sims reported: (i) Reports of vandalism, littering and evidence of drug-taking continued. Communications with the Accies and the police were ongoing; the latter were carrying out additional patrols. (ii) The proposal for the installation of a gate across Small Gains Lane had been discussed with the adjacent landowners but not all were in agreement.

**48.7 The Lock Up.** (Responsible: Cllr Norton Mahy) Cllr Norton Mahy reported that refurbishment of the information plaque was in hand.

**48.8 Merchant Taylors' Green.** (Responsible: Cllr Martin Hoffman) Nothing to report.

**48.9 Carters' Pond.** (Responsible: Cllr Martin Hoffman) Nothing to report.

**48.10 Street furniture.** The Chairman reported his concerns at the unsightly stickers placed on the litter bins (these belonged to the Parish Council but were emptied by the NHDC contractor). These made a request to report when the bin was full; he questioned whether the regular emptying service had been suspended and replaced by an 'on request' system. This would be investigated.

**48.11 St Mary's Churchyard grounds maintenance.** (Responsible: Cllr Martin Hoffman) Nothing to report.

**48.12 Parish Clock.** (Responsible: Cllr Mark White) Nothing to report.

**48.13 War Memorial.** Nothing to report.

## 49. PLANNING MATTERS

*See appendix below with a summary of recent consultations and their status.*

**49.1** New applications received from NHDC for consultation.

**No.2 Ashwell Street.** NHDC Case Ref. 19/01809/FP.

Full Planning Permission: Erection of a detached 3-bedroom dwelling, detached single garage, new vehicular access onto Ashwell Street, and ancillary works.

It was agreed that this be considered by the Parish Council's Planning Committee (meeting to be scheduled for Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> September).

**Action: Clerk/Deputy Clerk**

**49.2 Townsend House, 24 Lucas Lane.** NHDC Case Ref. 19/01377/FP.

The additional proposals made by the applicant and the response made to the NHDC Planning Officer by the Parish Council and local residents were noted. It had been reiterated that the height of the hedge in addition to the bank be maintained at 1.8metres. Changes to windows on the side elevations and the distance from a neighbouring property had also been questioned. District Cllr Tom Tyson reported that he had raised these issues with the NHDC Planning Officer who had responded that, (i) conditions would be put in place re the hedge, (ii) the windows on the first floor would be frosted, (iii) the gap of 900mm between the new building and the neighbour's hedge was deemed to be sufficient. A proposal was made that no request be made to call in this application assuming written confirmation was received from the Planning Officer that the matters re the hedge would be conditioned as part of the permission.

It was *resolved* that the proposal be approved.

**Action: Clerk**

**49.3 Land at junction of Ashwell Street and Station Rd.** NHDC Case Ref. 19/00455/FP.

No further updates received following the consultation on the amended application.

**49.4 Land rear of 4-14 Claybush Road.** NHDC Case Ref. 16/01797/1.

The following were noted:

(i) The withdrawal of the item by NHDC from their Planning Control Committee scheduled for Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July and the rescheduling for their meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> September.

(ii) The Parish Council's concerns at the errors and omissions in the NHDC Planning Officer's report and to agree a schedule for raising these with NHDC.

(iii) The further comments from the Examination Inspector to NHDC re the need for further amendments to the draft District Local Plan. These had included the need for NHDC to provide more justification for their

proposals to build on Green Belt land and questioned whether the number of houses proposed fitted the most recent figures required by central government.

(iii) The further communications from local residents. Local residents at the meeting also expressed their concerns at the very high number of documents re this application on the NHDC website; to review and consider these fully was a significant task both for members of the public and NHDC committee members. They also questioned whether all relevant documents had been made available to the public via the NHDC website.

It was agreed that a response be made to the latest NHDC consultation. This related specifically to the two documents that had been omitted by NHDC and concerned the policy requirement to provide safe pedestrian access to the site.

This response would reiterate that the site specific policy criteria for AS1 in the new Local Plan needed to be satisfied before planning permission could be granted. The first criterion was provision of safe pedestrian access; there were additional notes re this provision in the document. The understanding of the Parish Council was that, despite the outcome of the Land Tribunal, and the recent claims by the developer in the document now provided by NHDC, there were still unresolved legal issues pertaining to the use of the section of private road that was necessary to provide the safe pedestrian access to the proposed development site. The Parish Council had received information to the effect that the claim by the developer to be the dominant landowner, and therefore the holder of rights to undertake works to repair and clear the private section of Ashwell Street proposed to improve the safety of pedestrian access, were disputed. The view of the Parish Council remained that until all the legal issues were resolved and the site specific policy criterion relating to safe pedestrian access could be satisfied, NHDC should not be considering this application. Any grant of permission at this stage would potentially open their decision to legal challenge and potential litigation on safety grounds in the event of an accident involving pedestrians.

It was agreed that the response to the NHDC Planning Officer would also re-iterate the Parish Council's previous objections to the application.

**Action: Clerk**

It was agreed that the response to the NHDC Planning Officer would also inform of the Parish Council's serious concerns and intention to challenge the errors and omissions in the Planning Officer's report prior to the scheduled NHDC meeting in September.

**Action: Clerk**

It was agreed that Cllrs Graham Lee and Norton Mahy continue to work on compiling a detailed list of the errors and omissions in the NHDC Planning officers report. This would form the basis for a further meeting with District Cllr Tom Tyson and subsequent submission of the concerns to NHDC.

**Action: Clerk/GEL/NWM**

#### **49.5 Former Cooke Engineering site.** NHDC Case Ref. 16/02154/1.

It was reported that further photographic evidence of the damage and subsequent poor state of the verge adjacent to the right of way would be forwarded to the HCC officer with a request for action.

**Action: Clerk**

#### **49.6 Land off Station Road.** NHDC Case Ref. 17/01406/1.

It was noted that following the NHDC refusal and appeal upheld by the Inspector, the landowner and his agent had reached out again to the Parish Council and had asked for comment on a potential proposal for nine houses. It had been agreed that the Chairman would speak to them. The Chairman reported that he had reiterated the Parish Council's objections to a large number of houses that would create a 'bubble' development. Additional sports pitches were still wanted by the Accies but the Parish Council would not be in favour of a pavilion as well. The Parish Council had forwarded outline details of the new proposal from the agent to the NHDC Area Planning Officer who had advised that the agent should formally request pre-application input from NHDC to progress the matter.

#### **49.7 No.1 Newnham Way.** NHDC Case Ref. 19/00424/FPH.

It was noted that the ongoing concerns raised by local residents and the Parish Council, ie the precise location of the Partridge Hill boundary to the site and the further damage to the adjacent highways verge, had been forwarded to the HCC Officer with a request for a site visit.

**Action: Clerk**

#### **49.8 Land rear 1-11 Back Street.** NHDC Case Ref. 19/01515/FP.

The clarifications sent to the NHDC Planning Officer following the email from the agent were noted.

**49.9 Odsey Properties Ltd/proposals** by the local landowner for a car park, footways and housing development near the station; this to include improved footways from Ashwell. Nothing further to report.

#### **49.10 Land between Lucas Lane and Ashwell Street** (including the field known as Hunts Close).

The email from a developer informing that they were discussing proposals with NHDC (pre-application stage) was noted. The Chairman reported that they had requested the opportunity to brief the Parish Council

at the September meeting; he had agreed this. The agent had also informed that they were planning to hold a public exhibition in the village in September. The Parish Council had informed residents adjacent to the proposed site by email or letter.

## 50. FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS

**50.1** Proposal for approval of the monthly summary of accounts (see appendix below).

It was *resolved* that this be approved.

**50.2** Employment matters (Responsible: Chair & Cllr Graham Lee) The Chairman reported that the agreed update of contracts for the Clerk and Deputy Clerk was in hand.

**Meeting closed 9.10pm**

### Forthcoming meeting dates:

September Council meeting, Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019, 8pm in the Parish Room.

Planning Committee, Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019 (meeting to be held on site(s); times/location(s) to be confirmed).

### Appendix 1 – General material received

NHDC weekly ‘Members Information’; HAPTC briefings and bulletins; SLCC updates and newsletters; Police OWL/Rural News/Neighbourhood Watch bulletins, Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust newsletters.

### Appendix 2 - Summary of consultations on recent planning and listed building applications

*Details of applications are sent from North Herts District Council (NHDC) to the Parish Council as a consultee. These are available on [www.north-herts.gov.uk](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk). If any concerns are raised either by a parishioner or a parish councillor on an application, an on-site meeting of the Parish Council’s Planning Committee may be convened to consider those items. See the notice board, website or contact the office for the agenda. A summary is available on the website ([www.ashwell.gov.uk](http://www.ashwell.gov.uk)) Full details of applications are available on the NHDC website.*

Address	Application Number	Brief description	Ashwell PC Comments	North Herts Decision
10 High Street	19/01489/FPH	First floor rear extension and ancillary works.	Planning Committee Wed 3rd July PC Decision sent to NHDC: recommendation that permission be GRANTED	Pending
80 Ashwell Street	19/01379/FPH	Two storey side extension, single storey rear extension, demolition of existing garage and front porch extension, with ancillary works.	Planning Committee Wed 3rd July PC Decision sent to NHDC: recommendation that permission be REFUSED	Pending
Land rear 1-11 Back Street	19/01515/FP	Erection of two 3-bed detached bungalows with associated gardens and parking (as variation of permission approved under ref 15/00962/1)	Planning Committee Wed 3rd July PC Decision sent to NHDC: recommendation that variations be approved	Pending
Land Jct of Ashwell St & Station Rd	19/00455/FP	Amendments to previous application -see below	Previous objections to NHDC were reiterated. See minutes July Council meeting.	Pending
Land Jct of Ashwell St & Station Rd	19/00455/FP	Erection of 9 (6 No. Three Bedroom, 3 No. Four bedroom) dwellings with associated parking, amenity space and associated ancillary works, following demolition of existing redundant structures. Creation of new access from Station Road.	Planning Committee Wed 3rd April. PC Decision sent to NHDC: recommendation that permission be REFUSED	Pending
Land rear of 4-14 Claybush Road	16/01797/1	30 proposed dwellings with associated access, parking, amenity & open space.	PC Decision sent to NHDC: recommendation that permission be REFUSED	Pending: item scheduled for NHDC Planning Committee 19 Sept 2019

### Appendix 3 - Monthly accounts summary

<b>ACCOUNTS - Summary for 01/07/2019 - 31/07/2019</b>			
<b>RECEIPTS</b>			£
46	Nevilles Funeral services	Rent for Chapel of rest (July)	68.75
47	E H Crouch Funeral Directors	CW 19.14 Interment of Ashes	270.00
48	Santander Reserve Account	Interest 01/07/2019	5.93
49	Sigma Office	Advert 2019 Yearbook	125.00
			<b>TOTAL</b>
			<b>469.68</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>			
63	EON	Electricity for Pavilion (29/7/19)	22.60
64	EON	Electricity for Toilets Pavilion (22/7/19)	8.58
65	NHDC	Waste collection for office (1/7/2019)	110.50
66	NHDC	Recreation Ground Trade waste Bin	99.45
67	Clerk	Clerks reimbursements	35.91
68	Clerk	Clerk's salary	1,376.79
69	Deputy Clerk	Deputy Clerk's Salary	833.80
70	HCC Pensions-LGPS Account,	Clerk & Deputy Clerk Pension	773.23
71	Grounds Officer	Grounds Officer salary	169.00
72	ECO	Environmental Cleansing Officer salary	225.60
73	HMRC accounts ref 321PF00003624	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	492.35
74	Edwards Cleaning & Maintenance	Public Toilet Cleaning - May	189.00
75	D J Granger grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet 50	216.00
76	D J Granger grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet 51	808.80
77	D J Granger grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet 52	528.00
78	D J Granger grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet 53	1,836.00
79	D J Granger grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet 54	444.00
80	D J Granger grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet 55	540.00
81	D J Granger grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet 56	451.20
82	D J Granger grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds Maintenance Worksheet 57	147.60
83	Arena Stationers	Office stationery supplies	38.06
84	Arena Stationers	Office stationery supplies	48.91
85	Arena Stationers	Office stationery supplies	32.57
86	Brilliant Lawns	Rec Grass Cutting - June	330.00
87	Brilliant Lawns	Rec Grass Cutting - July	220.00
88	Duo Design	Website Hosting	30.00
89	T.J Fire & Security	Annual Inspection	67.89
90	Herts County Council	Intsallation of Station Road Village Sign	315.00
91	The Blue Tree Company	Merchant taylors walnut tree prune	150.00
92	Ashwell Parochial Church Council	PC meeting 14/5/19	8.00
93	ESE Direct	Lock and Keys for Filing cabinet	33.96
94	Home Builders	Repairs to leaking pipe in Pavilion	80.00
95	Clockwise Renovations	Annual Service to clock, St Mary Church	180.00
			<b>TOTAL</b>
			<b>10,842.80</b>
<b>MONEY AT BANK</b>			
			Current Account 31/07/2019
			<b>£26,731.55</b>
			Reserve Account 31/07/2019
			<b>£20,627.18</b>