

APPENDIX 2: Minutes of the public meeting held on 13th Dec, 2010

GATEHILL (NORTHWOOD) RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION



Note to Residents: Minutes of Gatehill Estate Meeting
Venue: Hillside Junior School 6.30 p.m. 13 December 2010

Present: Conservation and Urban Design Team, Hillingdon ("CTeam")
Charmian Baker, Sarah Harper, Nairita Chakraborty

Cllr Jonathan Bianco : Cllr John Morgan
Chairman: Rod Young("RY")

Circa 50 attendees representing circa 30 houses

RY introduced the meeting stating:

"As you know, your committee monitors and gives input into the Hillingdon Planning process in order to try to ensure that planning regulations are followed, and that the Gatehill Farm Estate retains its particular status as an Area of Special Local Character together with associated trees and greenery built on the plots laid out largely by Harry Neal in the 1920's - then sold with common covenants on each plot in order to avoid over development and which provide the open frontages which are a feature of the Estate.

Permitted development rights allow residents to undertake certain works without the need to submit a planning application. We have been concerned since October 2008, when wider permitted development rights were enacted, that the Estate's status as an Area of Special Local Character does not adequately protect it against unsympathetic development works.

Following on from residents concerns regarding certain planning consents and developments we contacted Hillingdon Planning Department. In February this year two representatives from the CTeam, came and walked around the estate with Chester Ball and myself and saw the Association's efforts to retain unimpeded grass verges on the private roads, open frontages, views of trees and greenery and the avoidance of over development which would impede such views and could lead to a terraced housing effect.

We were advised that Hillingdon Planning would look at the matter in due course and assess the area against its own criteria. We weren't sure how long the process would take but we were advised after the AGM that the conservation team had gained approval to consult with residents to see if they want the Estate to be considered for designation as a conservation area.

We saw the consultation paper for the first time, like all of you, on the 30th of November and then Chester Ball and Keith Tabor from our residents committee met with the CTeam on Friday 3rd December to clarify various aspects.

A number of residents and members of the committee have raised concerns as to what designation would actually mean.

I will now put these concerns to the panel, Chester Ball will minute the responses and we will distribute the minutes to all residents within the next couple of days."

QUESTIONS

If we become a conservation area to what extent will we lose the freedom we currently have to improve, enhance or extend our property as we think fit, without planning permission?

ANSWER

Householders will have the same rights as now to improve or enhance their property by changing their windows, doors and gates. Other matters affecting the visual look of the house will require planning permission, as stated in the consultation note.

Can we change garden sheds or put in summer houses without planning permission?

Yes, within existing Permitted Development Rights ("PDR") in the rear garden: if it is to the side of the house the change would require planning permission.

Can I still put in side gates and change my doors without planning permission?

Yes, this is within PDR

Can we change our windows without planning consent, for example change Crittall windows or leaded lights to double glazed UPVC windows ?

Yes

What happens with existing solar panels and satellite dishes, or future installations?

Existing are O.K. New ones facing the road would require siting with planning permission.

Can we still redecorate outside and change the colour of window frames or render without planning permission?

Redecoration and changing the colour of frames O.K. Changing the render or wall covering would require planning permission.

What additional fees do I pay when applying for planning consent and will it take longer by going before two committees – conservation and normal planning?

There are no additional fees and there are not two committees. The CTeam provide input into the planning process as at present. The only further application necessary in a Conservation Area ("CA") is if you wish to demolish your house and this application is "synced in" with the application for the newbuild.

Are you intending to apply for differential fees for conservation requests and/or applications in the future?

There are no differential fees nor any fee for demolishing a building in a CA. The level of fees is set by legislation.

Will it cost me more for building works because it has to follow conservation standards as opposed to those applicable to ordinary planning consent?

There is no reason why it would. The works standard would be what you have requested of your builder.

I have fruit trees to prune yearly. Will I need to notify the council before doing so and how long do I have to wait before carrying out the work?

On the assumption these trees are fruit bearing then write to the Tree Officer who is within the CTeam and request an annual exemption from Notification of Tree Works for such pruning.

Are you intending to charge fees in the future for such notifications?

There are no fees payable for such notifications. Fees levels are set by legislation.

I have some large trees which need lopping or perhaps felling. You have stated that I need to notify you and wait 6 weeks in case you want to issue a Tree Preservation Order. If you issue a TPO is there a fee I need to pay?

There are no fees payable for such Tree works notifications or TPO listings. Fees levels are set by legislation. Send in a simple letter to the Tree Officer identifying on a simple plan of your garden the tree or trees to which you are referring. There are many trees with TPO's on the estate already, but the notification gives the Tree Officer the ability to safeguard the best trees if necessary. If you do not hear anything after 6 weeks from the Tree Officer then you can proceed with your tree works.

Are you seeking to introduce in the future TPO fees that I would need to pay in this situation?

This is set by statute, not by the council.

What happens in respect of permitted development already carried out on the Estate?

Nothing, CA status is not retrospective.

Have you received any anecdotal comment concerning changes in house prices in areas designated as conservation as opposed to Areas of Special Local Character?

No, although we believe that CA status gives a higher degree of certainty to any purchaser that the amenity of the area will be protected.

My neighbour put in a room in his attic under permitted development. Will that still be permitted elsewhere on the estate if it is a conservation area?

Yes, if it is within the existing shape of the roof, otherwise it would require planning permission e.g. if a dormer window was required.

Haven't we already got protection against unsympathetic development by already being an Area of Special Local Character ("ASLC")?

CA is a statutory designation for protection whereas an ASLC is at local level only – it is helpful but not statute backed, and as such ASLC status is weaker when for example a Planning Inspector rules in the event of an appeal against a planning decision taken by Hillingdon planners.

What are your criteria in a consultation to determine whether that which is consulted upon becomes adopted? Is it a percentage of the residents, percentage of respondents, or is there no fixed formula for approval and therefore open to the interpretation of Hillingdon Borough?

The consultation is good practice and good support from residents is desirable. The CTeam will collate and report the responses to Hillingdon Cabinet after the end of the consultation period 21 January 2011 and the Cabinet has the final decision. If the decision is not supported by residents it will not work. It is very important to have residents support for the decision and for residents to know what they are voting on.

If we receive designation are you then able to “tighten the rules” in the future without our consent?

No, only an Article 4 direction could tighten the rules and that only takes place if residents want it, it can be fully justified and only after full consultation with residents affected. We have no article 4 directions at any of our CA's in Hillingdon.

Cllr Bianco then spoke (and gave apologies for the absence of Cllr Retter and (at that time) Cllr Morgan).

Cllr Bianco stated that he is at the meeting to represent the residents. The issue is up to the residents. He is also a member of Hillingdon Cabinet, the ethos of which is to serve residents. If the residents do not want a CA, it will not happen. Decision dates could be deferred or removed.

Although he lived in Frithwood Avenue, not in a CA, he would say that if residents wish to keep the Gatehill Estate the way it is then CA status will help achieve it. If you want enhanced development or blocks of flats as has happened in Frithwood Avenue, despite protest, then vote against CA status.

Other questions raised at the Meeting

What has changed since the application made in 1970 by the residents association for CA status which was turned down by Hillingdon Planning ?

The appeal of 1930's building and the layout of the estate has grown and is now more fully appreciated. Investor development on the Gatehill estate has been noted, and this trend is likely to continue.

There are diverse houses on the estate, some styles are good and some poor. Can you get consensus with such diversity, could some of the houses become listed ?

It is the spacious layout and size of the plots which is important and highlights area which could be improved. The layout has merit rather than the individual houses. In general there are very few individual 1930s houses which become listed.

CA or ASLC status does not affect “listing” of houses which can be statutory or local.

Chorleywood has some listed buildings which are of statutory merit. Listing can also encompass very high quality 20th century buildings or examples of a particular architect, but the Gatehill estate does not have these.

A CA will have an effect on residents seeking to develop.

Planning Applications are sent to Planning Office. The CTeam give input, as with ASLC applications and it goes before the North Planning Committee in Hillingdon (unless handled under delegatory powers by a Planning Officer for more minor matters) A particular CA representative can provide comment as part of an CA Advisory Committee.

Velux windows are O.K. as permitted under PDR although new Sat dishes front and side will need to be sited with Planning permission.

Existing ASLC does not protect against demolition, whereas CA status does require consent to demolish.

ASLC gives limited assistance in planning appeals as Inspector perceives neither council nor residents have sought CA status which recognises that particular aspects of the estate are important-e.g. landscape, townscape.

The Devil is in the detail. Hillingdon's Unitary Development Plan's policies B5 and B6 about size, suitability and building plots protect ASLC and if Planning Officers used these correctly the estate would be protected. The change to CA status gives marginal benefit.

B5 and B6 give some protection it is not statutory and these have no national recognition.

C Ball stated that the policies can be interpreted in different ways and the residents committee's observations and objections in respect of planning applications only have a circa 60% success rate in helping to amend unsympathetic development applications.

In Hatch End a resident in a CA was only able to replace crazy paving with the same ?

It is possible there is a Section 4 Direction in place in Hatch End but if Gatehill estate gains CA status people can resurface their driveways in accordance with PDR.

Why are some houses at the top end of Elgood Avenue near Watford Road not included in the prospective CA ?

These houses are not included in the existing map of the Gatehill Estate ASLC.

What percentage of votes is required for CA status 75%, 52% ?

Cabinet will look at type of responses. If Cabinet think it wrong to have CA status they will say so or if appropriate reconsult in the light of comments received.

Private Roads have a 20 m.p.h. speed limit, public roads on the estate 30 m.p.h. Could not all roads be 20 m.p.h. on the estate?

Cllr Bianco advised that a consultation was underway or had just been completed in respect of the cut through via Woodside Road and hoped there would prove satisfactory. CA status would have no bearing on speed limits.

Climate change will affect new builds and necessitate existing houses having additional insulation, biomass boilers, PV tiles. How will that affect CA status ?

This matter is already important for Hillingdon planners and they will work within government guidelines to get the best results in this matter. If there is a need to install a 2nd skin on a house planning consent will be required.

If Hillingdon convert to Wheelie Bins how will that affect CA status ?

Cllr Bianco advised Hillingdon will not convert to wheelie bins nor fortnightly collections and its choice of recycling bags is to avoid the numerous boxes found in other boroughs.

CA Status still not help retain benefit of green verges or deter building of walls, residents would need to rely on covenants.

If CA implemented then at a later stage and if the residents agreed, an Article 4 directive could be made to cover these particular points.

Why is the council taking decision- making away from individuals and their long established residents association ?

CA Planning applications are made in the same way as now ,with decisions continuing to be made in Hillingdon together with reference to the residents association.

Planning applications are delegated to a firm in Northampton who do not know the area and make their recommendations unless someone from the council says otherwise.

The qualified planning officers at this firm visit the site and make their recommendations for CA's and ASLC's with input from the CTeam, including its Tree Officer, Access Officer, Sustainability Officer as appropriate.

The decisions are made in the normal way within Hillingdon.

Cllr Bianco advised: This outsourcing provides value for money with qualified personnel who should follow stated and agreed protocols.

Is not Copsewood as ASLC protected by UDP policies including B5 and B6 ?

CA status was first raised in 2006 and again this year led by its ward councillor. Anonymous letters have unsettled residents. There has been more redevelopment there than in Gatehill, Copsewood is further along that trend.

Gatehill Estate has not changed much for the past 30 years, why change status now ?

Some unsympathetic development and concerns about wider permitted development mean that CA Status can provide better protection than as at present in respect of the visual amenities of the estate.

Cllr Bianco advised: There is a general presumption that CA status provides better protection than the existing ASLC status. Consultation responses will be assessed and reported on but there will be no imposition of CA status. The object of the meeting had been to dispel misapprehension.

Meeting closed 7.45 p.m.

If any resident wishes to raise any further enquiries in person with the Conservation Team at the Civic Centre could they please email nchakraborty@hillingdon.gov.uk in order to make an appointment.

Likewise could residents email or write should they wish to add or amend any comment made by them to the Conservation Team at London Borough of Hillingdon, 3N/02. Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW