

Minutes Hills Amenity Society AGM 16 May 2019

In attendance:

HAS Committee: Stephen Cohen (Chair), Ian Locks (Newsletter/Hills-Watch/Press/PR), Wendy Fisher, Brenda Harris (Planning), Lisa Godsalve (Secretary). Apologies from Peter Wynn (Hon. Treasurer) but was in attendance towards the end of the meeting.

Councillors Chris Pond, Caroline Pond, Bob Jennings

Approximately 20 residents were also in attendance.

1. Chair's Introduction

Stephen Cohen opened the meeting and gave a brief update from the last year.

- 1.1. Vehicle related topics around parking and speed limits:
People parking in inconvenient places and not enough parking space during school drop off/pick up time. These issues have been raised by local residents on HillsWatch, which currently has 56 members - conflicting views on the introduction of parking permits. Speeding cars in the narrow lanes, compounded by the parking issues is also of great concern. Chris Pond advised that monitoring strips will be placed across the danger spots of York Hill to monitor speed, in response to the HAS request for a 20 mph limit.
- 1.2 It was reported that in response to an increase in car thefts and anti-social behaviour in Baldwins Hill, a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme has been created and has been quite effective.
- 1.2. Some of the Victorian style Street Lamps have had their warm yellow bulbs replaced with bright white LED bulbs and there has been varying views on preference with some people welcomed brighter lights for added security, whilst others prefer the dimmer lighting. We have also seen a missing Victorian lamppost in Stony path being replaced with a standard lamppost.
- 1.3. The Committee, has continued to monitor planning applications in the Hills and has seen various applications relating to "Woodberrie" on Woodbury Hill, and although the application to knock the whole house down was refused we have seen a lot of changes to the site which we have been monitoring.
- 1.4. Sadly, the efforts to save the studio used by the famous sculptor Sir Jacob Epstein in the grounds of 46 Baldwins Hill on the corner of Whitakers Way was unsuccessful due to it not being listed and council officers ruled it therefore did not require planning to remove it.

- 1.5. It was advised that last year's winner of front garden competition was **Bill Jamison, 11 Forest Way**. We will be looking for this year's winner very soon and the Chair welcomed residents' participation in the judging or nominations for consideration.
- 1.6. The annual Autumn Lunch was held at the Gardeners Arms and this will be repeated in 2019.
- 1.7. Finally, Stephen advised that he will be standing down as Chair of the Hills Amenity Society after 5 years in post and we are therefore looking for a new Chair. He welcomed anyone who would like to join the committee or get involved in the Committee's work. On behalf of the Committee, Wendy thanked Stephen for his fantastic contribution over the last 5 years.

2. Officer Elections

Officers on the Hills Amenity Society Committee advised that they were standing again for re-election for a further year and this was approved and seconded. The Chair's position is currently open and new members are actively being sought. (Note Toby ??? of Queens Road said he would like to rejoin the committee and was invited to do so.)

3. Treasurer's report

It was noted that the Hon. Treasurer's report showed income from subs, donations and newsletter ads for 2018/19 was £566.00 a small increase over the previous year. Membership remained stable at an average over the last 6 years of around 86 residents. Expenditure for the year was somewhat more than last year, due to fees for web hosting and web domain renewal which covered two years. From next year we are planning to make it possible for residents to make payments online."

The committee thanked Marcus Warren of the OMM Group, for his continued support to the Hills by producing the newsletters free of charge. However, Marcus was retiring so we would need to consider cost effective options for future productions of the newsletter. A copy of the accounts would be available on the website.

4. Minutes of May 2018 meeting

The minutes were approved.

5. Ask your Councillor session

Ian Locks introduced the panel members, Councillors Chris Pond, Caroline Pond and Bob Jennings to lead discussion and answer questions.

5.1. Parking and dangerous driving

The first question was raised by Maureen Page, of Queens Road on what can be done to ensure safe passage of school children to the Staples Road school every day, avoiding drivers who are speeding, driving dangerously and parking on the intersections with Queens Road/Staples Road and York Hill. A full account of the daily obstacles experienced walking to school was outlined including dangerous fast driving, drivers not paying due care, parking on dropped kerbs/double yellow lines on the intersections and on School Green, limiting visibility when trying to cross the road. There have been discussions with the Head Teacher and they have tried various things but it is still an ongoing issue of concern.

Possible deterrents were discussed, and it was suggested that a request is made to the City of London Corporation to install wooden posts along the York Hill stretch of School Green. More monitoring of school run times was also requested to discourage blocking of pathways.

Chris Pond advised that although we can raise with the City of London Corporation there would be cost implications which will need to be considered. It was advised that damage to the grass is not only by parents' cars but also commercial vehicles and bollards around the whole Green would help to preserve it.

Action: Caroline Pond to raise the issue at the next Forest Liaison Group.

Other ideas explored during the discussion were: buying some cones to put up around the corners of the York Hill/Staples Road/Queens Road intersections but Chris advised that the Highways Agency would not like this measure and as we already have double yellow lines he suggested the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) officers come down to see the problem for themselves and enforce the yellow lines. Chris reported that more complaints had been received from Alderton Hall School than Staples Road School, however he has taken the comments on board. Chris added that it could suggest putting "loading restrictions" in place as well as the double yellow lines but warned that it's not always effective.

Bob Jennings advised that Judy Jennings has been working with traffic wardens and has asked them to do more spot checks. Judy has also explored the possibility of parents parking in the Traps Hill carpark and is discussing with the Head teacher. Not only would this be a safer solution it would also limit the pollution from cars when parents leave their engines running to drop their children off at the school gates. Chris added

that maybe the agenda on climate change might have an impact. It was felt that although the various measures being discussed were welcomed, the bad offenders of dangerous driving and parking may not take any of this on board. The safeguarding of the children is obviously paramount, and schools often insist that children are met at the school gate but the Traps Hill carpark idea and maybe setting up Parent's Association patrols might help.

5.2. Lighting in the Hills

Brenda Harris raised again the issue of the lamppost near the corner of Queen's Road/Pump Hill still not being connected and the fact that it is not a Heritage style lamppost. Another resident gave a full account of the various unsuccessful stages of the Council's Street Lighting Department trying to reinstall the lamppost over the last 3 years. Chris was already aware of the Street Lighting Department inadequacies but advised that only the very top of Pump Hill is in the Conservation Area so that's why they haven't replaced with a Heritage Style lamppost. He added that he has made various attempts at speaking with senior managers in the Street Lighting Department regarding damaged Victorian Lampposts not being replaced with appropriate replacements within the Conservation area. Instead they are "antiquing" the lampposts.

A resident from Stony Path also gave the example of the lamppost outside 22 Stony Path being vandalised and being replaced with a standard LED lamppost instead of an appropriate Heritage style lamppost. Chris advised that he has already spoken to the Street Lighting Department about this and thinks that they will use an embellishment kit to give it an "antique" look.

Action: Chris to chase the Street Lighting Department regarding the lamppost outside 22 Stony Path. Pressure to be maintained to "heritage dress" new lampposts.

The replacement of Heritage orange lights with bright white LED lights was also raised. Conflicting views have been expressed on HillsWatch, with some people in favour of brighter LED lights to help with security. However, Chris feels that LED lights are too bright and are not in keeping in the Conservation Area. He advised that he has also raised this with the Street Lighting Department and he was advised that it is not against policy. He has challenged this with the Highways Department as he feels that LED lights in the conservation area are inappropriate. If anyone wants to challenge the policy with the Highways Department as well, please email kevin.bently@essex.gov.uk (is this correct)?

A local resident raised his concerns regarding more highbred quieter cars becoming more popular and the lack of sound they produce, coupled with people often speeding in the hills. With this in mind, he would very much welcome a reduction in the speed limit used in the Hills.

5.3 20mph Speed Limit and Residents Parking

Ian Locks opened the discussion on the possibility of introducing 20mph speed limits with the panel. Chris advised that 20mph speed limits must apply to strict regulations and confirmed that monitoring wires will soon appear in York Hill to measure speed of passing vehicles.

Ian also raised the issue of Residents Parking and advised that Jack Russell from Queens Road is strongly opposed to residents permits in Queens' Road for various reasons described in his recent HillsWatch post. There was a lengthy discussion and Chris advised that following residents parking on Kings Green, by the War Memorial, residents of Shaftesbury, at the western end of Staples Road, have gained the 70% support necessary for a resident's scheme to be considered by NEPP and Staples Road is likely to follow. The last consultation took place 6 years ago and following a poll of residents were more against residents parking.

Action: HAS Committee to continue to monitor residents parking views.

Bob added that residents parking schemes have been introduced in Debden and the parking permit fees have not been popular with residents (£52 for the 1st car, £80 for the 2nd car and £132 for the 3rd car) Tradesmen will need to pay for visitors permits of £1.30 a day.

A resident added that the polling system is not fair as if residents parking was agreed and implemented, the impact would be on the neighbouring roads who may not have been included in the poll. This may then encourage everyone to have parking permits and the parking issues will just keep radiating out to other neighbouring roads. Also, we have to be mindful that more cars may start parking on York Hill if residents parking is brought into Staples Road etc. If parking permits were implemented the core hours would be 11am to 3pm so this would not solve the problems at school pick-up/drop off times. However, it would stop people parking in Queens Road for 2 weeks while they go on holiday. Chris advised that time durations are always up for discussion and this could be put forward if requested.

From a poll taken at the meeting on whether they would be in favour of parking permits, the four residents in Queens Road were not in favour.

It was advised that following the issue of increased parking levels along Baldwins Hill and inconsiderate parking, contributed by many teachers and support staff at Woodcroft School in Whitaker's Way, residents had a series of meetings with the Head Teacher. Staff have since been more considerate about where they park but evidence of car sharing has not been seen. Obstructions on pavements remains an issue.

4. Planning permission for tree work in Conservation areas

Caroline advised that any resident wanting any tree surgery undertaken in the conservation areas, needs to liaise with the Tree department and will need to make a planning application. Hedges would be included in the hills area as well as part of Article 4 direction.

5. Zebra Crossing safety issues

Toby Scrutton raised his concerns around the safety of the zebra crossing by the cricket ground and added that drivers are not taking any notice of the crossing and it is often very difficult to cross safely. It was noted that the refuge in the middle of the crossing was taken away and ways of making the crossing safer and more visible to drivers needs to be explored. Chris advised that this is a County Council issue.

Action: Chris Pond/Caroline Pond to raise the concerns expressed with on the Zebra Crossing with the Council.

5.6. Homebase replaced by Lidl and Planning Application for flats on the Station carpark

Bob Jennings reported that Homebase will be shutting mid-Summer and will be replaced with Lidl. This is a commercial arrangement and is nothing to do with the Council. There will be 39 car spaces and parking/traffic issues are not anticipated. Bob also raised the issue of TFL's application for a 14-storey block of flats being built on the current station carpark. This application will go to District Council to determine what will happen. Concerns at the AGM were expressed around the impact on parking and disruption caused to residents near the carpark and the possible knock-on effect to commuters parking in other areas of Loughton with the parking provision at the station removed. It was emphasised that the Resident's Association and the Town Council are strongly opposed to the plans and have engaged a barrister for advice.

5.7 Chris Pond reported that St Clare's Hospice are running an open Loughton Back Gardens Day on 22 June and advised that anyone interested in opening their garden to please contact the Town Council.

6. Ian closed the meeting, thanked the panel for taking questions and giving helpful answers and the residents for asking challenging questions. Ian reiterated the importance of the collective effort of everyone helping to conserve a cherished Conservation Areas and asked for people to consider either joining the committee or helping us when they can.