

ASHBY PLACE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Meeting 1 June 2006
Hoole Community Centre

Present

Jamie Baird, Peter Bradshaw, Vicki Bulgin, Kirsten and Stuart Cook, Mr and Mrs Peter Cushing, John (Chair) and Fil Hawkins, Corrine and Christian Nielson, Simon Sherriff, Louise and Peter Strickland, Richard Waugh

1. Apologies

Jan Barrow, Louise Chan, Terry and Val Cunningham, Alex Sharp, Helen Watts

2. Minutes from the last meeting

The minutes from the last meeting were approved.

3. Matters arising from the last meeting

There were no matters arising that were not going to be covered later. Members agreed that Hoole Community Centre was a more suitable venue than the Flookersbrook.

4. Chairman's report and reports of working parties

John Hawkins reported on progress since the last meeting. John has made contact with the person responsible for the regeneration of King Street which was in a similar situation to Ashby Place. John suggested that we have a social event, on similar lines to those in the past, and asked for ideas.

4.1. CCTV

Simon Sherriff reported on CCTV and noted that The Association needs to decide if CCTV is required as it might give the impression of a high crime area.

Regarding a CCTV system there are two main options:

(i) A full system with four cameras along the street and recording apparatus situated in a weatherproof housing. This would need separate electricity, cabling, and would be very expensive.

(ii) A system with dummy cameras and signs to act as a deterrent. This would cost considerably less than the first option.

Simon recommended the second option if The Association is to proceed. From a practical viewpoint, he stated that ownership of the road would need to be established before any cameras could be installed. He also noted that planning permission would be required and that the council will not allow cameras on lamposts.

Christian asked how big the crime problem was and would the cameras still be an effective deterrent after six months. After a discussion it was felt that recent incidents in the road were mostly opportunistic and carried out by casual criminals. It was thought that these would be deterred by CCTV and Simon's experience suggests that petty opportunist crime is reduced by this. To get a better idea of the current situation it was suggested that a log of incidents should be compiled. John reported that other residents in Flookersbrook have had private CCTV fitted and have been happy with the results but Simon pointed out that installing cameras in a street is very different to just on one house. It is much more expensive and other aspects need to be addressed. Richard Waugh suggested a "halfway house" option that involved putting up a "CCTV in operation" sign only. This was thought to be a good way forward. It

was also suggested that an additional cul-de-sac/no through road sign may be required.

ACTION: Log of incidents to be written up by John.

ACTION: Richard to buy and put up a "CCTV in operation" sign.

4.2. Ownership of road

Jamie Baird has found that there are no records of ownership of Ashby Place in the land registry which means that the road has not been bought or sold in the last 25 years. There is a process that The Association can follow to gain ownership/stake a claim to ownership of the road and there are agents who will do this for a fee. The Association will need to decide if each household should own part of the road or if a trust should own it all. Issues such as how to distribute the ownership also need to be addressed if the former option is taken.

There was a discussion of what responsibilities would be conferred on the residents if they owned the road. It was considered that the residents already have responsibilities even if they do not own the road and that someone could already make a claim if they were to have an accident.

It was also stated that solicitors always find road ownership problems during conveyancing of houses in Ashby Place and these problems may be reduced if ownership was clarified.

The question of adoption by the council was raised. The council will not adopt the road because it is not adjacent to another public highway. Even if the council was able to adopt the road it is probably in the residents' best interests if the road remains unadopted. In adopting the road the council would charge the residents to resurface the road to the council's specification leaving the residents with no control over the road at all.

The question was asked should an agent be employed to gain ownership of the road or should The Association do this? An estimate of an agent's charges is ~£500.

It was proposed that Jamie should get two quotes from agents and if the fee was £500 or less an agent should be used, and if more then Jamie should report back to the next meeting. How to achieve ownership and a timescale should also be established.

ACTION: Jamie is to get quotes and more details from agents.

4.3. Estate agents

Alex Sharp has discussed Ashby Place with estate agents and has found out that they think the area would benefit from improvement. It was suggested that CCTV, controlled entry via gates and a fully repaired road would increase the asking price on each property by £10-15k regardless of its size. Christian Nielson has also asked an estate agent if CCTV would affect the value and was told it would not. It was felt that it may be worthwhile to find out the opinions of other estate agents on these matters.

ACTION: Alex to be asked to speak to at least one other estate agent.

5. New Constitution

The new constitution for Ashby Place Residents Association was discussed. It was also noted that another constitution (separate from this one) will also need to be drawn up if The Association is to apply for charitable status or for other financial arrangements.

Vicki Bulgin proposed an amendment to the current draft: removal of the word "enhance" in section 2(i). After a discussion this was voted on and the amendment passed.

Peter Cushing queried the use of the word "buildings" in 2(ii). Richard explained that this referred to buildings which may have been neglected by their owners and fallen into disrepair. This would allow The Association to exercise moral authority over the owners to return the buildings to a presentable state. A discussion ensued on whether to remove or replace the word buildings to make this meaning clearer. Peter Cushing proposed to remove the words "and buildings" in section 2(ii) and this was seconded by Vicki Bulgin. A vote was taken but only a minority voted in favour and this amendment was not passed.

Peter Cushing also queried the membership rules as stated in the draft constitution. He suggested that membership should be open to all adults over 18 years old living in Ashby Place. This would mean one vote per member as opposed to one per household. Richard explained that what was in the draft constitution was the standard approach used in constitutions for residents associations. After further discussion Peter Cushing proposed an amendment to change the membership so that each person over 18 would become a member. This was seconded by Peter Bradshaw. A vote was taken but the amendment was not carried.

Christian Nielson queried how voting would be carried out under the new constitution. Would it just be on a straight majority basis or would it be more complicated? It was felt that for this constitution, a straight majority would suffice but a different system may be required for the financial aspects of the project and would be covered by a different constitution. To clarify the sentence on general voting 8(i) and improve the grammar, another amendment was proposed by Christian Nielson and seconded by Simon Sherriff. It was suggested that "if less than five members are present" be changed to "if fewer than five non-committee members are present". This amendment was carried.

A vote was then taken on approving the constitution as a working document, subject to the two amendments. This was proposed by John Hawkins and seconded by Peter Strickland. The constitution was approved.

ACTIONS: remove word enhance from 2(i). Amend 8(i) to read "If fewer than five non-committee members are present".

6. Annual General Meeting

6.1. Election of officers

The following officers were put forward for election

Chair: John Hawkins
Proposed by Peter Strickland
Seconded by Simon Sherriff

Treasurer: Peter Bradshaw
Proposed by Filomena Hawkins
Seconded by John Davies-Humphreys

Secretary: Louise Strickland
Proposed by Richard Waugh
Seconded by John Hawkins

All officers were approved unanimously.

6.2. Working party objectives

Richard said that work was under way on estimating costs for financing the upgrade of the road.

Simon asked if it was necessary to spend as much as some estimates suggest? Would a large bill put people off and result in fewer people paying their share?

John gave his personal view that we should be improving the area to the best standard we can, not only for ourselves but also for those who live here after us.

Richard added that if the road is to be used as collateral then the repair would need to be as good as possible otherwise a bank would not be willing to lend the money. The repairs will need to be phased carefully so that they are manageable from a financial and practical point of view.

Simon asked if the facts and figures of what has been done concerning the road before were available and if it was known what still needs to be done to repair the road. It was agreed to include a summary of what has happened before as an item on the agenda for the next meeting.

It was also decided that there should be a discussion of charitable status and any sources of outside funding at the next meeting.

ACTION: Peter Bradshaw as treasurer will take over the books by the next meeting and check on our financial status. He will issue the members with an invoice for the £25 subscription fee for the year 2006/7.

ACTION: John will provide details of previous surveys of the road at the next meeting.

ACTION: Jamie and Simon are to investigate the current situation with the road. Peter Bradshaw is also willing to help.

7. AOB

Stuart Cook asked if the large house at the end of the road was included in the project as the owner also uses the road. This would make 20 households involved in the project.

Questions were also asked as to how the costs would be split if the residents agree to go ahead. This would need to be discussed thoroughly but The Association will concentrate on getting the funds first before tackling this question.

Richard suggested that we all try to get rid of the weeds in front of our houses as this would benefit the road.

John raised the problem of speeding and it was suggested that perhaps a speed limit sign may be necessary.

Vicki also said that the pavement should not be forgotten when the improvements are considered. It was also mentioned that previous suggestions had included the

possibility of removing the pavements and using the wheelers in the centre of the road. Peter Cushing noted that conservation officers may not agree to this.

A social event is being planned for the summer and details will be circulated at a later date.

Time, date and place of the next meeting

The date for the next meeting was provisionally set as Thursday 7th September at 7:30 pm in Hoole Community Centre.

Louise Strickland
Secretary, Ashby Place Residents Association