



FRIENDS OF BUTTS CLOSE

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER

January 2018

Outcome of the Public Inquiry into the Council's Proposal for a Road across Butts Close?

Still waiting...



The "Objectors' Bench" at the Inquiry
Photo: Simon Maddison

No, you haven't missed it. We were hoping that by now the Planning Inspectorate would have reached a decision, but they have not yet done so.

This is most likely because subsequent to the Public Inquiry there has been some correspondence questioning whether the Swim Centre and Archer's Gym staff are adequately alerting their customers to the availability of parking at the Lairage.

With scrupulous fairness, each time someone writes to the Planning Inspectorate on this matter (or indeed on any other matter relevant to the case) the letter is copied to the Council and to the formal objectors who presented their arguments at the Inquiry, giving the opportunity for rebuttal or further comment. The FoBC Steering Group has not added to this correspondence. We believe that our submissions at the Inquiry were sufficient to support our case, and we do not have any robust evidence to address the adequacy or otherwise of signage at the swim centre etc.

We did however respond to the request by the Inspector on the matter of options for fencing and hedging of the access roadway, should consent be granted to the Council. We had asked by email for all members' views, and as a result we submitted the following to the Inspectorate:

The [Friends of Butts Close Steering] Group have unanimously approved the option set out below for hedging of the proposed access road, should consent be granted.

Condition

Prior to first use the road will be screened by a hedge of 2 metres in height. The hedge will comprise a mix of native species to be agreed with the Friends of Butts Close.

Reason

To minimise the effect on the visual amenity and maximise the nature conservation value of the site.

The good news at least is that once the Planning Inspectorate has made its decision, there is no basis for an appeal. An application for a Judicial Review would be possible, but given the rigour of the Public Inquiry the High Court is unlikely to give its permission.

So right now all we can do is sit back and wait...

Litter-picking on 15th October 2017 and on Sunday 25th March 2018



October 2017 – the Usual Suspects...

October seems a long time ago, but a good band of Friends made the usual collection (!). Thanks to everyone who volunteered.

And the next Big Hitchin Spring Clean-up will be on 25th March. So grabbers at the ready, please!

The Butts Close Bollards

When we were working on the Greenspace Action Plan with Andrew Taylor of the Countryside Management Service we discussed what to do about the bollards. Many are crumbling with age. Over time their iron reinforcing rods expand and contract, and water gets into the cracks, which then freezes, resulting in lumps of concrete dropping off. We asked through an earlier newsletter whether people wanted them replaced or whether a post and rail fence would be preferable. Most people wanted to retain the bollards as an historic feature of the Close - they do have an art deco quality about them. There was however no capital to replace them.

But Andrew Mills the NHDC Grounds Manager, has now identified a pot of money and is using this to replace 25 of the most damaged bollards. They will be cast replicas, and they will be identical to the existing ones. He is indeed a Friend of Butts Close.

Tony Riley
for
Friends of Butts Close

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Contact Friends of Butts Close at buttsclose@gmail.com and Hitchin Forum through www.hitchinforum.org.uk