

New move in fight to keep centre off green

By DOUG WYTHE

PROTESTORS have enlisted the help of environmental campaigner David Plumstead in their battle to prevent Hythe council build a community centre on the town's green.

A private meeting last night (Wednesday) resulted in plans being drawn up in the battle against the proposals.

Mr Plumstead, from Lympne, fronted his environmental group Greensword during the public inquiry into the Romney Marsh bypass plan.

He said: "I have been asked by Hythe people to help them in their bid to stop the community centre being built on the green."

"The council is wrong-headed in thinking it should be there. It has not thought the matter through, especially in connection with the covenant on the green."

"The council seems to think that because a covenant reaches a certain age it is no longer valid."

Mr Plumstead said he was interested in reports that there was a beneficial connection between an upmarket coming to Hythe and building a community centre on the green.

Mr Plumstead said he felt Hythe council had badly judged the way the high street was going. He said the high street did not need a store like Iceland, which opened last week.

Mr Plumstead said: "We need more local stores, not an Ironmongers."

"I also feel more could be made of the existing centres in Hythe. The Canon Newman hall should be promoted and used. There is no real need for a community centre."

A town meeting is being organised by the protesters following the decision by the council to put the community centre on the green.

'GREEN PLAN' THROWN OUT

Report by Bryher Golding Barrett

THE controversial plan to build a community centre on Hythe Green has been thrown out by council planners.

In an amazing twist all three Hythe town councillors on Shepway's development control committee were denied the chance to speak and vote because the application had been made in the name of Hythe Town Council.

Councillors Chris Capon, Wendy Harris and John Spencer were all forced to declare an interest and left the council chamber. Ms Harris told committee chairman Dick Pascoe she was 'very unhappy about it'.

But after the meeting Hythe's mayor Eileen Bailey said the decision to submit the application in the name of Hythe Town Council had been agreed by councillors.

Outside the council chamber environmental campaigner David Plumstead, who has joined the campaign to protect Hythe Green, said: "I was very disappointed the Hythe town councillors were not allowed to speak."

Asked to leave

"It cannot be in the public interest that the only three district councillors on that committee who represented the people whose business it was were asked to leave the room."

"Hythe Town Council created the situation by putting the application in the way it did. It effectively gagged the only three Hythe councillors at the meeting who should have been representing the people and I think it was fundamentally wrong."

At the meeting Councillor Alan Roots (Lib Dem, Dymchurch and Burmarsh) proposed the application be refused. He said: "I am not happy with this at all and I think our policy to retain recreational land should be protected in this vicinity."

"If there was a proven need for another hall, which I don't think there is, then it might be different."

Councillor Robert Leach (Lab, New Romney) agreed: "Turn to Page 5"

Trust chairman criticised over letter of resignation

GEOFFREY Roberts, chairman of the Hythe Community Centre Trust set up to run the scheme to build on Hythe Green, has resigned.

He gave in his resignation at a meeting of the trustees on Wednesday, September 27 but in a letter to the *Herald*, dated September 22, Mr Roberts said he had resigned on September 15 — a full four days before the Town

Meeting to discuss the Green project was held.

But Mr Roberts attended that meeting and was duly introduced as trust chairman and invited to speak on the plans.

He told the *Herald* this week: "The town council invited me to attend the meeting and answer questions. It was my last duty as chairman."

"The mayor, Eileen Bailey, and Geoffrey Par-

tridge, vice-chairman of the trust, knew I had resigned but would attend the meeting.

"I didn't make my resignation public because it would have caused a great deal of uncertainty. I didn't want the trustees to see it in the press and it would have been quite chaotic to try to tell them before the meeting."

Mr Partridge, who is also a town councillor, said: "Officially, he didn't resign until he tabled his resignation at a trust meeting. Until then he had to carry out the chairman's duties."

Mrs Bailey would not comment on whether she knew Mr Roberts had resigned before the meeting.

Garry Muers, chairman of the Hythe Green Preservation Society, said: "He was invited to the meeting as the chairman but if he had resigned four days earlier he shouldn't have been in the building let alone allowed to speak. It's outrageous."

'Unsatisfactory'

Mr Roberts resigned just days after the town council's finance and general purposes committee refused to transfer £10,000 from the council's community centre fund to the trust because the trust had yet to be registered with the Charities Commission.

Mr Roberts said: "There are so many things for which the trust will need the council's agreement and its support is totally unsatisfactory."

His letter slammed town councillors for being 'easily diverted from mature business thinking'.

It read: "For a few years now the town council's work has been degraded by pseudo-politics and pettiness. The new council is

turning out to be no improvement."

He also criticised councillors Chris Capon and Wendy Harris who, he said, had campaigned publicly and privately against the centre.

But Mr Capon hit back saying: "It is up to him what he thinks of Hythe Town Council but what matters most is what the people of Hythe think."

"How can a man who has resigned go to a public meeting as chairman of a trust when he no longer holds that position?"

Ms Harris said: "Mr Roberts should know by now that if I have supported people in a campaign I am not likely to turn my back on them at the first fence."

GARRY Muers is due to resign as chairman of the HGPS next week. He said: "We are going to formalise the society."

"When I was elected there were only about ten members. Now there are many more and we have to set up a committee and do it all properly. I will resign and I hope members will re-elect me."

Green future

H.H. 28.9.95

H.H. 5.10.95