



Newmarket  
T O W N C O U N C I L

Meeting of the Newmarket Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and officers from Suffolk County Council, West Suffolk/ Forest Heath District Council held on

24 August 2017 in the

Ernest Cassel Room Memorial Hall Newmarket

Members Present

Councillor M Jefferys (Newmarket)

Councillor J Morrey (Newmarket)

Councillor A Drummond Mayor of Newmarket Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture

Councillor W Hirst (Newmarket)

Jill Korwin Director (West Suffolk)

Julie Baird Assistant Director Growth (West Suffolk)

Robert Feakes (Suffolk County Council)

Boyd Nicholas

Damien Parker

Brian Prettyman

Rachel Wood

Sara Beckett

Apologies received and accepted from Councillor R Hood Chair of NNPSG / SCC Councillor

Introduction by MJ Vice Chair of NNPSG and introduce why we are having this meeting the purpose of which is to discuss where we are with the 2 closed middle school sites St Felix and Scaltback. We want to put into our plan uses of those sites but we don't want to contradict Suffolk County Council (SCC) or Forest Heath District Council (FHDC)

Gather information so we as a NHP can put that in our plan and what is going to happen

Robert Feakes thought it would be helpful to start by reporting back on questions posed last time.

What are the County Council's view as to what whether Scaltback and St Felix sites might be available for the uses the Neighbourhood Plan (NHP) wish to progress

## **SCALTBACK**

### **1. Would Suffolk County Council be interested in bringing that forward as an allocation for housing?**

Need for a new Primary school early 2020 and have assessed different site options as to where new primary school could go the Scaltback site represents the best option for establishing new Primary school and can go alongside the Rugby Club

Above is Based on Local Plan as submitted by FHDC submission draft as Hatchfield Farm not included in Local Plan

Awaiting decision on Hatchfield and associated Section 106 monies. School would be sited at Hatchfield and Secretary of State has raised no concerns. If Hatchfield comes along the school would be sited there and not Scaltback as only one site needed

With regards to allocation of housing on Scaltback and having looked at that Scaltback is the preferred site for a school and therefore wouldn't be looking at Scaltback for housing

### **2 St Felix would this be available for use as a sports hub**

Proposed in Local Plan site allocation for 50 dwellings and protection of the open space SCC are looking to follow that model and follow district plan and to bring forward the housing allocation there. In relation to the open space which is in the Local Plan SCC are willing to discuss with NHP the use of that

Boyd Nicolas confirmed that from Local Plan development should not be greater than the existing footprint of the school but scope to re configure where that would be provided no net loss? Old school foot print or new school foot print

### **To summarise**

No to Scaltback with housing but willing to discuss use of open space at St Felix

Further discussion following on from above

In the short term SCC have been working with the rugby club to renew their lease and to keep them there. Wouldn't want to suggest that the rugby club are not secure at Scaltback but in the longer term if there was an opportunity for them to move to a different location it would be up to the club.

NNPSG felt there is an opportunity to think big and would like the assurance of SCC that this could happen. How much money would it cost to develop the Rugby Club on Scaltback by injecting a lot of cash into that it's diminishing the amount that could go into a new Sports hub at St Felix? We would like to know costings.

SCC felt that the Rugby Club is a sovereign organisations and they would have to make those decisions SCC have not spoken to the rugby club about any form of relocation and it was an understanding that they wanted to stay at Scaltback and SCC would facilitate that. SCC would not use force to move them but would be amendable to have a conversation with the rugby club should they show that desire. Emphasis has been to give the rugby club security

NNPSG felt that there is an opportunity to use the available schools sites for Newmarket's benefit.

Boyd Nicholas advised that if the 50 dwellings were to be allocated by the NHP to Scaltback the NHP would be at odds with the Local Plan.

Could the 50 houses and sports hub be accommodated at St Felix?

The only rational for the Rugby Club to move to a sports hub would be that they would share and co locate with other sports users they wouldn't need the same sort of size of dedicated accommodation that they presently have.

Would be dependent on the availability of George Lambton Playing fields. George Lambton himself is making representations that this site should be a mixed use site provided that an alternative site could be found but from the old 1995 plan nothing suitable has come forward.

NNPSG would like to know where the figure of 50 houses being allocated to St Felix site had come from especially in relation to any traffic survey that has been undertaken. BN advised that the numbers came from a straight calculation of the existing footprint 30 dwellings per hectares. Traffic would have been run past consultant.

FHDC advised that unfortunately many things depend on timings and of course those timings are not known especially related to Hatchfield.

FHDC would like more information about the sports hub

[a] What does it potentially comprise of?

[b] How it would sit in different places and how it would interact with homes on those sites

NNPSG would like to make Newmarket a wonderful place and part of that is to have the sports clubs in the same place after informal discussions with the rugby club it is a restrictive site with no room for expansion. The football Club do not have practice pitches despite developing their ground and the young teams would not need to travel to Dullingham as they currently need to plus Newmarket Joggers. Badminton and Gym Club depending on the provision of a Hall.

If George Lambton Playing fields were developed it could not be a sports hub but with those public playing fields there is sufficient space for the Rugby and football pitches.

Information gleaned from residents says that they are ashamed of the facilities at the rugby club and it hasn't work for their benefit.

FHDC and St Edmundsbury report stated that GLPF was under used NNPSG felt this may be understandable due to it terrible state . The skate park is being attended the changing rooms are having a 'make over' this closed season so that is being addressed. Aspiration would be that sports can work together but wondered why the football club were having to train youngsters out of Newmarket and not using their facilities

NNPSG stated that the transport links around St Felix are much more suitable and St Felix presents itself as a much better site for Newmarket and visiting teams. Due to the Football Clubs previous plans it is clear they would rather be in Newmarket

Pitch Playing and indoor facilities have been looked at Abbeycroft are investigating their options too involving Newmarket Academy. Lack of changing facilities.

We need to be clear about what the need is and the willingness of clubs to work together which is the challenge. The sports Hall requirement needs to be clarified in FH as there is an under provision and FHDC are talking to SCC and of course funding needs to be addressed, so how can these be provided.

There has been a short term solution to the Badminton and gymnastics club but that is not long term and this is a current challenge for FHDC to provide that long term.

FHDC would be willing to explore the sports hub idea with NNPSG but we know it's not going to be easy to put these dreams, dreams which we should have but we need to turn them into reality which is the challenge.

If a sports hall was to be considered for St Felix then the need for changing rooms at George Lambton would be reconsidered.

NNPSG asked questions about the proposed school at Scaltback

### **Facts presented**

It would be a fairly small school to begin with

A one form entry but in the long term SCC would like it to expand

### **Looking at the population growth NNPSG wanted to know where that evidence was**

Existing population in Newmarket

Birth rates 5 years in advance from NHS

25 pupils per 100 dwellings

School age forecast + rate at which housing would come forward according to Local plan

11-16 year olds 18 /100

16+ 4/100

Early education 10/100

SCC advised that in relation to housing on Scaltback there is a covenant to maintain sports use, which is not insurmountable they are not sure of size of site .The footprint of rugby club buildings is not that big more of the space is taken up by pitches

NNPSG felt the siting of a school and houses plus some open space play area is what people like. A school and housing for the pupils and parents works well and currently Scaltback does not have open space so our proposals would be an advantage.

SCC have a piece of software that looks at travel patterns and from that it looked at where all the current primary school aged children are living in Newmarket and the allocations of the local plan. Tested the options Scaltback and St Felix and then also applied the Hatchfield option to show which option showed the need for travel. SCC have to provide a choice of primary school places as directed by Government. SCC would like children to attend the nearest school but no assumptions made so it was to minimise travel and based on these tests there was virtually NO DIFFERENCE between St Felix and Scaltback the difference was negligible.

NNPSG Do we have to assume that that the rest of the land at Scaltback has to be the rugby club could we not put the extra houses there?

FHDC have policies seeking to retain playing pitches and public open space + community facilities

2.2 of NHP policies is an example of wishing to retain open space

Needs to be a strong rationale of policies which applies to GLPF

NNPSG are only arguing the change of space not where it is.

FHDC acknowledge there would be no net loss of green space SCC have 2 sites and their assessment of what they believe to be the preferred site for a school. SCC have had conversations with the rugby club because they wanted security of tenure, now we have a NEW OPPORTUNITY which is to look at the St Felix site and through the local plan have potentially allocated 50 homes on the site, but given its proximity to GLPF something could possibly sit alongside that . The decision to close Scaltback has happened and now have to find a long plan for the clubs that were there. So there are OPTIONS and the feasibility of these options needs to be looked at in addition FHDC are looking at the possibility of increasing the size of the Leisure Centre to provide long term 'homes' for badminton and gymnastics. The rugby club will need security for the here and now as any plans we can come up with will take time.

NNPSG found this useful

Discussions are needed with the Rugby Club and Football Club and find out what other groups would use the facilities. Julie Baird felt that NNPSG need to discuss with the rugby club first and then look at other options. THIS WAS AN AGREED ACTION but how we go about this would need to be investigated.

The covenant on Scaltback was discussed and the possible breach of it ~ this would need to be investigated further as Brian Prettyman had not read that.

FHDC ~ The long term future of clubs affected by the closure of Scaltback is being discussed and with the emerging NHP this could work well and if these long term plans could come to fruition then the short term solutions for those clubs could be easier to withstand, but Football and Rugby have not been looked at by FHDC. The football club have

installed all weather pitches but it was always assumed that the rugby club would want to stay at their current site.

NNPSG felt that the rugby club are feeling that nothing has happened since a consultation a few years ago.

FHDC and SCC were looking at the school sites but this was pre closure decision and a feasibility study was undertaken if enabling development came forward on the footprint and the numbers did not stack up. Demolishing and building cost and the facility mix that would be required to make it work from a revenue position which mustn't be forgotten. FHDC are having to look at bringing their costs down in relation to Leisure so revenue is very important.

The report looks at

Facility mix

Position in development

Costs of building out

FHDC asked NNPSG Who would pay and who would run it

Could be set up as a Charity

Funding from organisation e.g. Sport England

NNPSG felt that GLPF needs money spent on it.

FHDC stated predominate use of GLPF is Football and greyhound racing

NNPSG would like report by Neil Anthony FHDC will forward link

Boyd Nicholas gave an update to Hatchfield which was not allocated within Local Plan and awaiting decision by Secretary of State. There is an outstanding approved planning application.

There will come a point when Newmarket will need a new school after 2020 according to predictions, based on current allocations in local plan and trajectory of when those come forward. Hopefully Hatchfield will be resolved by then

NNPSG asked if rugby club moved and space was at Scaltback what the space would be used for.

West Suffolk said this would be based on what you can't do rather than what you can do and down to planning and legal advice would need to be sought over covenant.

It was not known if discussion had taken place between the Academy and Abbeycroft over the use of their playing fields they are a facility which is still there. And could/should we take this into consideration within the NNPSG plans

Questions of costs related to Scaltback over costs of demolition and the costs of security until demolition has taken place, but those costs are not known. Those costs will have to be met. It is a long process procurement asbestos Health and safety notice to be given

NNPSG questioned the authority to demolish buildings related to legal charge but this would need to be investigated.

General assumption that playing fields would be protected even as open space

West Suffolk have spoken to various sporting organisation and have spoken to English Rugby over looking at the demolition and rebuild costs.

NNPSG were disappointed that Newmarket Town Council were not consulted over the closure of Scaltback and why was that? It's not something that can be answered easily but was some time ago The property team only took responsibility once it had stopped being a school usually once it has been decided not used for educational use but this is a grey area. The closure of the school was primarily a educational decision not a property decision and that the attention of SCC was more focused on ensuring that it was communicated in the appropriate way at the right time than the property element and apologised that the property element was not picked up it would have been better to have consulted wider at the time but it was a difficult decision making changes in the educational system across Suffolk, the communication had to be handled carefully which took precedence over the property element.

**Action** FHDC will seek legal advice over ownership ? Urban District Council (which was dissolved in 1999) Forest Heath or Newmarket Town Council

Things to be addressed over Scaltback

NNPSG asked if the Primary School intended for Scaltback would be the same size as the previous middle school ~No

Suffolk County Council don't tend to secure sites for school less than 2.2 hectares i.e. 2 form entry, so what would happen to the surplus

Questions over:

Covenants

Planning

Secretary of State for education as still school playing fields

Suffolk County Council would not want to hold more land than it would reasonably need for the future i.e. if Rugby club was not there over half the site would be vacant and would need to be disposed of for value or pass it to someone that would then have revenue costs attached.

Discussion on enabling development as previously muted During canvassing previously it was reported that residents would not be adverse to housing on Scaltback and it could provide a play area which is lacking in that area.

Significant point is that we have these sites available and we want some joined up thinking about how these sites are used, we need an overall plan that is the best for Newmarket as that is what we are all interested. How it can be best utilised it's an opportunity to have the

best possible sports facilities , we get houses where we need them a primary school where we need it and there is that joined up thinking.

We need to do consultations

What do the Rugby Club want to do?

What do other sports clubs want to do?

FHDC said that currently we are going through the Local Plan process re allocations so the school sites have been allocated in a way that is in the site allocations and outlined That may not preclude it from being reviewed at a later point or by the view of the inspectors.

Scalback does not have an allocation therefore is a normal planning site and normal policy and/or restrictions would apply

St Felix has 50 houses allocation subject to examination.

That does not stop further work with these newer ideas

There is potentially a review of the local plan in 2018 and could be fed in there.

Julie Baird felt that the Local Plan must follow its course

The NNPSG should appoint a planning consultant as per her letter

We should turn our aspirations into policies in parallel with the Local Plan and decide whether we need to follow with it now with the impetuous that we have which does contain good objectives, but needs to be developed into policies or wait until the review of the local plan.

Julie Baird's letter provoked a lot of thought and was taken with a positive attitude.

Updated SCC about funding.

Councillor Jefferies thanked all for attending and a further meeting was arranged for

Thursday 02 November 2017

*Please also view email from Jill Korwin dated 30 August 2017 sent to all regarding reports*