

Relocation of Wycombe Sports Centre Athletics Track

Introduction

Wycombe Sports Centre occupies a 20 acre site. Approximately eight acres of this land is allocated to the athletics track and synthetic turf pitch (STP). The remainder of the land is occupied by the centre itself, car parking and two acres of grassed land close to the Handy Cross Motorway junction which also includes a telephone mast.

To finance the replacement Sports Centre project it is necessary to realise the land value of the site occupied by the athletics track and at some point STP and to relocate facilities to a suitable site elsewhere.

Despite the postponement of the main sports centre replacement project it has been agreed that relocation will be pursued to enable this part of the jigsaw to be completed and remove a possible cause of delay to the main project.

Background

The athletics track has approximately 17,000 users each year. It is the only track within southern Buckinghamshire. The main athletics club within the District, Wycombe Phoenix Harriers, is based here with approximately 400 members. In addition, Speed Demons, another athletics clubs has approx 200 members, and the track is also used by Handy Cross Runners. A large number of local schools use the facility for competitions.

[REDACTED]

Throughout 2008 the Council has been conducting a Sports Facility Strategy with an accompanying Playing Pitch Strategy to assess sports facility needs and demands across the district. The Sports Facility Strategy has been developed with face to face consultations with professional and non-professional sports clubs, local secondary schools and a wide range of partners as well as a stakeholder event. While the Strategy is not yet finalised its findings to date can be used in considering the relocation of the athletics track

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A further consideration is the impact on the existing Centre of relocating provision. At the moment bookings, caretaking and security are taken care of by the centre operator, Nexus Community. The Athletics Club has indicated a willingness to manage the Athletics Track and it is expected that the Council would not pay for this service but negotiate around income and maintenance. The track generates modest levels of income, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Financial Implications

[REDACTED]

The cost of purchasing land for these facilities would have to be investigated on a site by site basis where necessary. Identifying either land already owned by the Council or land owned by a partner willing to host the facilities negates the need to purchase land and therefore the assessment takes account of this.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Analysis of potential Athletics Track

Eleven potential sites that had been identified in previous discussions with Property, Planning and members were assessed for the placement of an athletics track [REDACTED]


[REDACTED]

The sites were assessed against a specification of requirements (see Appendix 1), with input from Wycombe Phoenix Harriers and reference to National Governing Body guidelines on facility design. The specification included the size of site required, the specific sports facilities required, geographic catchment areas and supporting features such as transport, car parking, floodlights and management of the site itself.

A table containing the score for each site considered in the options appraisal follows in Appendix 2.

Findings

Potential options for an athletics track

- 1) Queensway
 - 2) Sir William Ramsay School
 - 3) Grange Farm near Hazlemere Recreation Ground
- 

Recommendations

The purchasing of land for the athletics track and STP greatly increases the cost of the project and therefore any options where land has to be purchased are likely to rule themselves out.

All sites are likely to be opposed by occupants of any adjacent houses and whichever option is chosen, it is expected that some people will object.

Athletics Track

Queensway at 59 points and Sir William Ramsay School (SWRS) with 61 points are close to being joint preferable options for the athletics track.



Queensway is within the Council's ownership and there are no time constraints around bringing it forward. SWRS is a Foundation School, so no consent would be needed by BCC. It is possible that the school may require construction to fit around their schedules.

SWRS has been approached and was very keen to develop its sports facilities by accommodating the track. There is always a concern with school sites that a change at senior level can result in a change in attitude to community use of the school site. This would need to be guarded against with a legally binding agreement. There are no such issues with Queensway.

To deliver the scheme at SWRS might cost slightly less as landscaping will be minimal. At Queensway it is recommended that the track be surrounded by a grassed bank to reduce visual impact for neighbours.

A number of years ago, when relocation of the athletics track was also suggested an analysis of the school site was completed by an independent track specialist. The specialist identified the general feasibility for the school to fit a track. Queensway is of sufficient size to accommodate the track with ease.

The SWRS site is surrounded by houses and although high level floodlighting would be ideal for track users, a compromise may be needed such as low levels of lighting, low level bollard lighting, temporary lights or lights which could be raised when needed and lowered when not. The same solution can be adopted at Queensway, which would have the additional benefit of its banked surrounds to reduce visual impact.

Present transport routes to the school are through the housing estate, although the route is relatively short, the issue of access has been raised by Planning and would need to be checked with BCC. The Queensway site would need a new access road. It is known that the golf club has been interested in improving its access route and that a shared solution could be achieved.

[REDACTED]

Next steps

Members to decide their preferred option for the track from either Queensway or Sir William Ramsay School sites.

Discussions to take place with BCC on road and transport issues relating to the preferred site.

Officers to undertake detailed feasibility work on the preferred site and report this along with a detailed project plan to Members.

Athletics Track Site Summary of Potential Sites

Eleven sites were assessed and considered for a relocated athletics track and ancillary facilities including car park and pavilion. These included green field sites and sites with other facilities eg schools. If placed with other facilities there is a possibility that some facilities could be shared such as car parking.

Planning Services were consulted and agree overall with the results of the scoring identifying Queensway and Sir William Ramsey School as being best performing sites for the location of the athletics track. They have commented that provision of the track would be suitable on any of the four sites subject to design and floodlighting not being intrusive. Planning also advises that BCC should be involved in discussions about the preferred site to get their views on suitability of road network and site access requirements.

The three sites scoring highest were Sir William Ramsay School, Queensway and Grange Farm.

Queensway

The site is within High Wycombe and is large enough to hold an athletics track.

Car parking will be required, but there is a possibility of an agreement with the Golf Club to alleviate the size of the car park. An access road would be required though this could also be shared with the golf club, which is also interested in better access to its facility.

Orientation of the track is ideal with the home straight facing South East. There are no land ownership issues as the Council owns the site. Some earth moving would be required to level out a dip in one corner.

There are a number of houses that back onto Queensway land and nearby roads and resident objections are likely to arise. It is possible to create a bank around the track to minimise its visibility and disturbance to neighbouring residents. Low level bollard lighting may also be the preferred solution here.

Sir William Ramsay School

The school site is within High Wycombe. The school is very keen to have an athletics track. There will be no loss of active playing fields as the school has two other pitches it can use. The school already has car parking on site and is presently open until 10.30pm Monday – Friday.

The track does fit within its grounds, although consideration is needed on any surrounding security fencing. The site itself slopes towards the middle and there is a dip in the middle, although generally it is relatively flat.

Orientation of the track is ideal with the home straight facing South East. There are no land ownership issues.

The school site does have houses on three sides although on one side there is some tree screening. Some of the housing is large and resident objections may well arise. There is the potential for low level lighting to be installed.

Grange Farm

The site is large enough for an athletics track, and the site would not have to be purchased as it is in Council ownership. However it would impact on present uses. It is relatively flat.

An access road would have to be constructed as well as additional car parking. The site would be isolated and the costs of the access road would exclude the site as an option unless northern park and ride were developed on Hazlemere Recreation Ground or Terriers Farm. If the Park and Ride scheme progressed it would displace football pitch provision on to Grange Farm in any case.

Discussions over the all weather pitch proposed by Hazlemere Parish Council have indicated that resident objections may well arise.

Widmer End

The site is large enough for an athletics track. However, the site would have to be purchased and this option should therefore be discounted.

Planning issues generally would have to be considered as the Bucks New University application for this site was not well received and was subsequently withdrawn. An access road would have to be constructed as well as additional parking. The reaction to the proposal indicates that local residents would object.

APPENDIX 1

Athletics Track

Athletics Track	Essential Facilities	Desirable Facilities	Area / size requirements	Material
	8 lane track with 8 lane home straight			Polymeric Sandwich construction
	Double external long/triple jump			Same as track
	Pole vault runways	Min 6m away from track		Same as track
	Throwing events (hammer /discus cage) Javelin (run up)			
	Floodlighting (100 lux) 200 lux for competitions	8 columns at		

	Essential Facilities	Area / size requirements	Desirable Facilities	Area / size requirements	Material
		18m would provide adequate lighting for infield training)			
	Power source at start and finish				240 volts
	PA System				
	Permanent track kerb				Aluminium or plastic accepted by NGB
	Home Straight should avoid facing setting sun, (225 - 315 degrees of compass) Ideally facing South East Spectator seating should not face setting sun. Location should not have any strong prevailing account wind				
Club House	One Changing room (male) 2 toilets 2 urinals 5 showers	10m x 4m	Four Changing rooms	4 x 10m x 4m	

Essential Facilities	Area / size requirements	Desirable Facilities	Area / size requirements	Material
One Changing room (female) 3 toilets 5 showers	10m x 4m			
Club to have own equipment storage area for competition equipment and training aids	Min ceiling height 4m 10m x 5m finishing			
Storage (tractor / training aids)	Min ceiling height 4m 10m x 5m finishing			
Kitchen capable of supplying refreshments to officials and athletes	5m x 5m			
First aid room	4m x 2m			
Scoring room / office with window (to be placed at finish end of club house)	4m x 3m	Fitness/weights room 10m x 10m		
Meeting room	10m x 5m			
Multi – purpose area / café (design could be	10m x 5m			

	Essential Facilities	Area / size requirements	Desirable Facilities	Area / size requirements	Material
	combined with meeting room) Windows to have shutters				
Seating	50 seats (no definitive statement from WPH – would prefer more)	10m x 4m [REDACTED]	200 seats Depending upon design seating could be incorporated into club house design [REDACTED] Base to be added	25m x 5m	Metal Plastic Folding Potential to have simple seating - benches
Security	Minimum of 2 metres high fencing required around perimeter of whole site. If fencing is adequate enough mats could be stored on the track within metal mobile covers	Length depending upon site Minimum of 600 metres length?		-	
Car parking	Car parking – 100 spaces Coaches spaces – 6 Disability car park 4 spaces	50m x 50m Tarmac [REDACTED] Gravel - [REDACTED] Grasscrete [REDACTED]			

	Essential Facilities	Area / size requirements	Desirable Facilities	Area / size requirements	Material
	The sites have been assessed without the Indoor Athletics Facilities. The Indoor facilities would be on the Wish List of the Athletics Club				
Small Scale	Adjacent to outdoor track Toilets Athletics specific training surface Minimum provision of roof and 1 side wall 4 lanes	Min length 40m excluding run off			
Indoor Facilities Regional	Floor surface for spikes 6 Sprint lanes 60m length Provision of horizontal jumps and other field events Adjacent to outdoor track Toilets Storage Strength training rooms Meeting rooms Changing area	82m x 25m 7m high			

APPENDIX 2

Athletics Track

Primary criteria For short listing Score Outcome 0 - unacceptable 1 - poor 2 - acceptable 3 - good	Sir William Ramsay School	Highcrest School	Four Ashes	Holywell Mead	Kings mead	Marlow Gravel Pit	Molins	Queens way	Slate Meadow	Widmer End	Grange Farm (Behind Hazlem ere Recreati on Ground)
Site large enough for essential facilities in specification: athletics track/ clubhouse car park	3	0	3	0	3	3	0	3	3	3	3
Construction works needed that are likely to create prohibitive costs – e.g. site clearance, earth removal	2		1		3	2		2	2	3	3
Orientation: layout of site means home straight not facing setting sun, (335 - 515 degrees). Ideally facing south east	3		3		3	1		3	3	3	3
Site liability to flooding	3		3		0	2		3	2	3	3
Elevation or layout of site prevents the use (i.e. wind factors prevent competitions; &/or land is on an incline/uneven)	3		2		3	2		3	2	3	3

Primary criteria For short listing Score Outcome 0 - unacceptable 1 - poor 2 - acceptable 3 - good	Sir William Ramsay School	Highcrest School	Four Ashes	Holywell Mead	Kings mead	Marlow Gravel Pit	Molins	Queens way	Slate Meadow	Widmer End	Grange Farm (Behind Hazlem ere Recreati on Ground)
Land ownership issues conflict with use	3		1		3	2		3	1	1	3
Prohibitive/major planning issues prevent use	2		1		1	2		2	0	1	1
Prohibitive access issues (e.g. likely cost of infrastructure or insurmountable restrictions).	2		1		2	2		3	1	1	2
Sub Total	21		15		18	16		22	14	18	21
Secondary criteria											
Any requirement to purchase land	3		3		3	1		3	1	1	3
Site dependent upon other facilities being constructed	3		2		3	2		3	3	3	1
Potential public reaction	2		0		0	1		2	1	1	
Allows construction by summer season 2010 or 2011 (5 years since track resurfaced)	3		3		3	3		3	3	3	2
Site able to comply with requirement of floodlighting	1		1		1	2		1	1	1	1
Site conforms with club and school user requirements & aspirations	3		2		3	2		3	2	1	3

Primary criteria For short listing Score Outcome 0 - unacceptable 1 - poor 2 - acceptable 3 - good	Sir William Ramsay School	Highbury School	Four Ashes	Holywell Mead	Kings mead	Marlow Gravel Pit	Molins	Queens way	Slate Meadow	Widmer End	Grange Farm (Behind Hazlem ere Recreati on Ground)
Orientation - Spectator seating should not face setting sun	3		2			3		3	3	3	3
Any issues with surrounding area - transport / road links	2		1		2	2		2	1	1	1
Any additional costs of construction related to site (e.g. access road needed)	3		1		3	2		2	1	1	1
Amount/complexity of planning issues involved with site	2		1			1		1	1	1	1
Impact upon current facilities – any loss of facilities eg football pitch / cricket	3		3		1	3		3	3	2	3
Legal issues (Covenants)	3		3		2	3		3	0	3	3
Noise issues (users traffic)	2		2		1	2		3	2	1	3
Management issues	2		1		2	2		2	1	1	2
Security	3		1		1	2		1	1	1	1
Screening costs – eg additional trees	2		1		1	2		2	2	1	1
Sub Total	40		29		26	34		37	26	26	32
Total	61		44		44	50		59	40	44	53