Relocation of Wycombe Sports Centre Athletics Track

Introduction

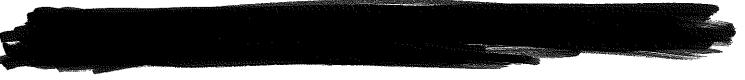
Wycombe Sports Centre occupies a 20 acre site. Approximately eight acres of this land is allocated to the athletics track and synthetic turf pitch (STP). The remainder of the land is occupied by the centre itself, car parking and two acres of grassed land close to the Handy Cross Motorway junction which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



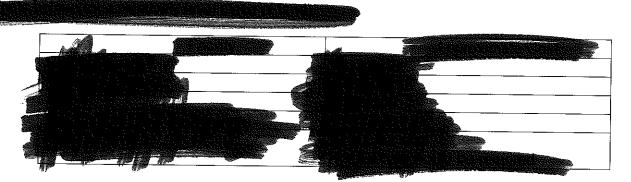
Throughout 2008 the Council has been conducting a Sports Facility Strategy with an accompanying Playing Pitch Strategy to assess sports facility needs and demands across the district. The Sports Facility Strategy has been developed with face to face consultations with professional and non-professional 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



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,



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.



Analysis of potential Athletics Transleten potential sites that had been identified in previous discussions with Property, Planning and members were assessed for the placement of an athletics track to the placement of the place

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.

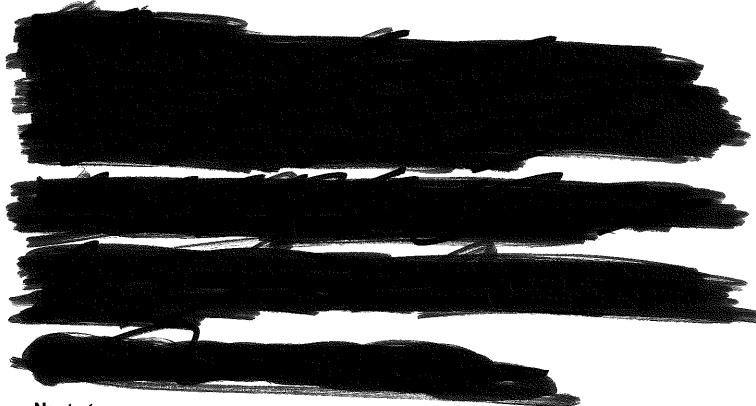
SWRS has been approached and was very keen to develop its sports facilities by accommodating the track. There is always a concern with school sites that a change at senior level can result in a change in attitude to community use of the school site. This would need to be guarded against with a legally 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.



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 raid 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.



Athletics Track report

	Material	Polymeric Sandwich	construction	Same as track	Same as track			
	Area / size							
Athletics Track	ities July Desirable Facilities	th 8 lane				from track ts us cage)		00 lux) petitions columns at
	Essential Facilities	8 lane track with 8 lane home straight		Double external long/triple jump	Pole vault runways	Throwing events (hammer /discus cage)	Javelin (run up)	Floodlighting (100 lux) 200 lux for competitions
		Athletics Track						

Material	240 volts		Aluminium or plastic accepted	by NGB			
Area / size requirements							4 × 10m × 4m
Desirable Facilities							Four Changing rooms
Area / size requirements 18m would provide adequate lighting for infield training)							10m x 4m
Essential Facilities	Power source at start and finish	PA System	Permanent track kerb	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	One Changing room (male) 2 toilets 2 urinals 5 showers
							Club House

report
Track
Athletics

Material		Metal	Plastic Folding Potential to have simple seating -	penches			
Area / size			25m × 5m	ı			
Desirable Facilities			200 seats Depending upon design seating could be incorporated into club house design	Dase to be added			
Area / size requirements			10m × 4m	Length depending upon site	Minimum of 600 metres length?	50m x 50m Tarmac-	Grasscrete
Essential Facilities	combined with meeting room)	Windows to have shutters	50 seats (no definitive statement from WPH – would prefer more)	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	Car parking – 100 spaces Coaches spaces – 6 spaces Disability car park 4 spaces	
			Seating	Security		Car parking	

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APPENDIX 2

Athletics Track

	Elevation or layout of	0	₩ to	Site large enough for essential facilities in specification: athletics track/ clubhouse car park	
	ယယ	ω	2	ယ	Sir William Ramsay School
	3			0	Highcrest School
		ω		ယ	Four Ashes
				O	Holywell Mead
C.	,0	ω	ω	ယ	Kings mead
N	2		2	ယ	Marlow Gravel Pit
				0	Molins
ω	S	ω	20	ω	Queens way
N	2	ω	2	ω	Slate Meadow
ω	သ	ω	ယ	ယ	Widmer
ယ	ω	ω	ω	3	Grange Farm (Behind Hazlem ere Recreati

For short listing Score Outcome 0 - unacceptable 1 - poor 2 - acceptable 3 - good	Ramsay School	School Ashes	Mead mead mead	Mariow Gravel Pit	Molins	way	Slate Meadow	Widmer End	Grange Farm (Behind Hazlem ere Recreat
Land ownership issues conflict with use	3	-	3	2		ω	-	_	Ground 3
Prohibitive/major	2	-		3					_
planning issues prevent						Ν.	0	-	
Use	1								
issues (e.g. likely cost			2	N		ω	_	_	2
of infrastructure or									
insurmountable									
restrictions).								-	
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Site dependent upon	3	2	یر	J					
other facilities being							C.	C.	ـــ
Potential public reaction	2	0							
Allows construction by	ယ	ω (ی در	3 -) N)		-
summer season 2010	1		J	C	ω		ယ	ω	2
or 2011 (5 years since									
Site able to comply with	اد		1	>					
requirement of floodlighting	·			N			3	_	
Site conforms with club	ω	2	ω	S					
and school user				N	٥		~	د	ω
requirements &									

	Total	Sub Total		Screening costs ea	Security	Management issues	traffic)	(Covenants)	Legal issues	pitch / cricket	facilities - any loss of	Impact upon current	involved with site	planning issues	Amount/complexity of	needed)	site (e n access road	Any additional costs of	transport / road links	surrounding area -	Any issues with	setting sun	seating should not face	Orientation - Spectator	3 - good	2 - acceptable	o - unacceptable	Score Outcome	For short listing	Primary criteria
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