



# Media Release

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## **BUILDINGS PERHAPS BUT NOT HOUSES ON RUGBY GROUND**

**BUILDINGS** but not houses on Claro Road was the message from Tim Richards, Head of Planning Services, at the first meeting of the Working Party which was held this week with representatives from the council, Harrogate Town FC and Harrogate RUFC to try and find a way forward for the future of the two clubs. This Working Party was set up following the first joint meeting between the three organisations held in March this year.

At the joint meeting, the council's Head of Planning Services was asked to report on the possible extension of the facilities provided at Claro Road for an extended leisure development, which would not be constrained by the Secretary of State's decision that no houses will be allowed on the site. This was seen as a way forward with a joint scheme, which would allow for other commercial leisure/recreational development on the Claro Road site.

At that meeting, Tim Richards was asked to look at the planning implications of a leisure development on the existing ground, which all sides felt was a positive way forward.

Tim this week outlined the planning implications for the Working Party under the Harrogate District Local Plan Policy R1, which seeks to protect recreational land from non-recreational development.

Tim was able to tell members of the Working Party that the policy contained an exception in the case of playing fields, where sports and recreational facilities can best be retained and enhanced through development of a small part of the site for complementary leisure/recreational purposes.

**NOTE TO EDITORS:** At the meeting held on 24 March, representatives from all sides were offered an explanation on the current situation regarding housing on the sites from the council's Head of Planning Services, Tim Richards. Tim summarised the situation:

### **Wetherby Road**

- Ground protected from non-recreational development unless a satisfactory replacement facility is provided

### **Claro Road**

- Refused planning permission for housing by Secretary of State
- There is a significant over-provision of housing in the district so there is no proven need for general housing
- Secretary of State's decision means there is no likelihood of housing on this greenfield site for the foreseeable future

The meeting on 24 March heard that new out of town sites for either of the two clubs is not deliverable because they would be unsustainable in terms of maximising accessibility by means other than the car and minimising car trips – which is in line with government policy.

The inquiry inspector, during the consideration of the relocation of Harrogate RUFC, had said that opportunities to extend Claro Road into the Bilton triangle had not been fully explored and this was agreed as the best way forward. This is a further major area of work for the Working Party.

ENDS

**FURTHER INFORMATION: please contact Mr Kevin Douglas, Director of Leisure and Amenity Services on 01423 556717.**