

# HARROGATE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## HARROGATE DISTRICT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

### CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION STATEMENT 16 (ES16)

#### COMMUNITY SPORTS REGENERATION AREA (C3) (SOUNDNESS TESTS: 4A / B / C; 6; 7; 8 AND 9)

##### Key issues:

Does the location for the Community Sports Regeneration Area represent the most appropriate in all circumstances, having considered community needs and the relevant alternatives, and is it founded on robust and credible evidence? Does this policy provide an appropriate and deliverable strategic framework for the proposed Area Action Plan consistent with national and regional policy?

#### 1.0 Is the identification of the Community Sports Regeneration Area based on consideration, appraisal and evaluation of all reasonable options and alternatives in the light of community sports needs?

##### 1.1 The need to retain the existing rugby club ground in sports use

1.1.1 Since the early 1990's, Harrogate Rugby Union Football Club (HRUFC) has sought to expand its sporting facilities through the redevelopment of its existing ground at Claro Road, Harrogate for housing and its relocation to a larger site on the outskirts of the town. Harrogate Rugby Union Football Club and the Council have searched for and assessed many alternative sites for possible relocation but no suitable alternative site has been found. Proposals to build a new rugby club in the Crimple Valley, off Leeds Road, and Moorlands Farm near Killinghall have been rejected by Planning Inspectors (**NCD13** and **NCD14**). Both public inquiries considered many alternative sites in and around the town. In 1998, the Harrogate District Local Plan Inquiry assessed over 20 alternative sites, including the site promoted by the Council as a relocation site in the Crimple Valley. However, the Local Plan Inspector recommended the rejection of this site and concluded that:

*“there is no satisfactory site for the wholesale relocation which would avoid harm to interests of acknowledged importance and would meet the needs of the club”*

1.1.2 In 2003, a Secretary of State's 'call-in' inquiry was held into the Council's decision to be minded to approve a relocation site for HRUFC to the north west of the town near Moorlands Farm, Killinghall and to approve residential development at the clubs' existing site on Claro Road. In rejecting both proposals, the Inspector concluded the following about alternative locations for the future of HRUFC:

*a long and seemingly exhaustive search for an alternative site, involving as many as 36 possible locations, has been undertaken.”*

*“it appears to me that opportunities for the extension of Claro Road into the Bilton Triangle and using Granby School have not been explored as fully as they might have been. I would regard this as the optimum location for improved facilities having the advantage of continuing on a site or area within the urban area where accessibility is acknowledged to be good and no problems of operation have been experienced. It appears to me that problems of finance and the large scale aspirations of the Club rather than planning considerations have been most influential in ruling this site out of consideration”. A copy of the committee report is included in Appendix A to this statement.*

- 1.1.3 The Council's view, having up-dated its assessment of alternative site options (Appendix 8 and 9 of the Community Sports Regeneration Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Consultation (**LCD78**)) is that there are still no suitable sites on which to relocate the rugby club. Since the submission of the Core Strategy, the rugby club has submitted a planning application for its relocation to a green belt location at Thistle Hill, Knaresborough. The Council has prepared a draft sustainability appraisal for the Community Sports Regeneration Area Action Plan (**LCD92**). This includes an assessment of the site which is the subject of the planning application along with those sites considered in **LCD 78**. A copy of the officer report to the Planning Committee on 27 March 2008 is attached as an Appendix to this statement. Following the publication of this officer report, recommending refusal of the application, the application has been withdrawn.
- 1.1.4 There is a need to secure the future of Harrogate Rugby Union Football. It is a very important community sports club both to the town and District as a whole. It is the only rugby club in Harrogate and dates back to 1871. It has 4 senior male, 1 senior female, 8 junior male and 6 mini mixed teams.
- 1.1.5 The importance of Harrogate Rugby Union Football Club to community sport in Harrogate and the above evidence on the lack of any alternative sites for the rugby club relocation provides a strong case for the Council to retain the club's existing facilities at Claro Road, Harrogate for sports use.
- 1.1.6 The Council is committed to this outcome, having taken into account that the club may be evicted off its site in December 2009 by the landowner.
- 1.2 The need and potential for more rugby pitches in this area
- 1.2.1 Evidence in the District's Playing Pitch Assessment and Strategy 2004 (**LCD59**), as supplemented by the Area Based Analysis, 2008 (**LCD91** Page 13) confirms the need for additional rugby pitches for the Harrogate area (1 adult pitch/1.58ha and 4 junior pitches/1.5ha presently and 4 adult/6.32 ha and 6.3 junior/2.36 ha by 2018). There are no other rugby grounds in the town. The land to the east and north east of the rugby club (towards Kingsley Drive) has been afforded long term protection as open land in the development plan since the early 1990's. Policy C10 of the Harrogate District Local Plan (**LCD17**) protects the land as a 'green wedge'. This designation prevents this part of the town becoming one undifferentiated built up area and seeks to encourage public access into the area. This land is generally level and of a sufficient size and shape to accommodate additional sports pitches. It is in private ownership and either used as grazing land for horses or left unused. The land offers a good opportunity for the expansion of the rugby club at Claro Road.
- 1.2.2 The above evidence provides a strong case for the enhancement of sports facilities in this area as promoted by Policy C3.
- 1.3 The need and importance to retain land adjacent to the rugby club as open land and importance of making it accessible to the public
- 1.3.1 One of the key criterion of the 'green wedge' policy (Policy C10) of the Harrogate District Local Plan (**LCD17**) seeks to maintain and enhance access within green wedges to provide informal recreation. This further strengthens the Council's case to retain and enhance sport and recreation in this area. RSS Policy ENV15: Green Infrastructure (**RCD22**) promotes the identification of areas of green infrastructure in LDFs to provide networks of accessible, multifunctional sites (including parks, woodland, informal open spaces etc) which link together. Paragraph 15.113 of **RCD22** states that these networks can provide links between town and country, between different parts of an urban area, and between existing and new development. The first two of these qualities clearly apply to the 'Bilton Triangle Green Wedge' and are stated as applying to all 'Green Wedges' in Harrogate in the

paragraphs 3.36 and 3.37 of the Harrogate District Local Plan (**LCD17**). Furthermore, the Council has undertaken recent work, in accordance with PPS7 (**LCD80**), to justify the continued designation of 'green wedges' in the new Local Development Framework. The relevant evidence is contained in **LCD80** (paragraphs 2.1 to 2.4, 3.4 and 4.1 to 4.5). Whilst for the purposes of preparing the Development Control Policies DPD, these are interim findings, it is considered that this provides sufficient justification for the principle of retaining the green wedge designations covering the open land adjacent to the existing rugby club and extending as far as Kingsley Drive within the Local Development Framework.

1.3.2 It is the Council's view that the above information and evidence and the importance placed on Green Infrastructure in the draft RSS clearly indicates that the open land to the east of the existing rugby club at Claro Road, Harrogate, continuing up to Kingsley Drive, should be retained and protected from built development that would adversely affect its generally open character.

1.4 The potential for sport within the grounds of Harrogate High School.

1.4.1 Land to the north/north east of the existing club is occupied by the Harrogate High School. The school enjoys 'Sports College' status and is the only 'specialist sports college' in the town and District. This status means that the school is expected to raise standards of achievement in physical education and sport for all their students across the ability range leading to whole school improvement as well as being a regional focal point for promoting excellence in physical education and community sport.

1.4.2 The school has informed the Council that:

- it has a surplus of playing pitches in terms of its own requirements.
- it supports more intensive community sports activity on some of its playing fields.
- it supports improvements to sport and recreation in the general area.

1.4.3 The Harrogate Hockey Club is already located within the school grounds and is seeking to expand/improve its facilities. The dual use of school sports facilities with the community is a very efficient use of land and a measure encouraged by the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy (**LCD59**) and national policy.

1.4.4 This is further evidence to justify the Council's case for the retention and enhancement of sport in the area identified in Policy C3 of the Core Strategy.

1.5 The need for additional sports facilities, the aspirations of local sports clubs and the lack of alternative locations for meeting these needs and aspirations.

1.5.1 For many years, a number of the towns sports clubs have sought, but failed, to relocate and enhance their facilities. Evidence of this is provided in:

- the justification to Policy R5 of the Harrogate District Local Plan (**LCD17**),
- the interest shown by Harrogate Town Football Club and a tennis consortium (Community Sports Regeneration Area Action Plan DPD: Preferred Options Consultation, **LCD78**) and
- the Pannal Sports Football Club's recent submission to the Borough Council (**LCD95**)

1.5.2 Many of these aspirations are justified by the Council's evidence of need for additional sports pitches in the town (See section 2 of this paper). The sensitivity of the landscape and the extent of the green belt around the town have acted as major constraints in their search for new sites. (Appendix 8 and 9 of **LCD78** and **LCD95** provide evidence of the difficulties of finding land for sports use around the town).

1.5.3 The need for sports facilities in the town of Harrogate and the aspirations of local clubs to modernise, improve, extend and consolidate illustrate a strong case for more, better quality and consolidated sports facilities in the town.

1.5.4 In conclusion, the lack of suitable alternative sites for the relocation of sports clubs in the town, the need to protect land currently or last used for sport in recreational use and the need to protect much of this area for open land uses combine to make a compelling case for the:

- New sports facilities for the town to be met in the Claro Road/Kingsley Drive area
- Core Strategy to set the framework for the way in which this area should be developed for sport and recreation in the forthcoming Community Sports Regeneration Area Action Plan.

**2.0 Is it justified by robust and credible evidence?**

2.1 The Harrogate District Playing Pitch Strategy 2004 (HDPPS) (**LCD59**) identified a need for more mini and junior football pitches, more rugby union football pitches and at least one further full size artificial turf pitch. This need has been further emphasised in the Area Based Analysis (**LCD91**) which highlights the current pitch deficiencies in junior and mini football, adult and junior cricket, adult and junior rugby union and adult and junior hockey in the Harrogate area as shown below. By 2018 the evidence provided by this supplement points to a much larger need for pitches in all these categories and the surplus of senior football pitches would only be 4 pitches.

	2008		2018	
	No of Pitches	(Ha)	No of Pitches	(Ha)
Adult Football	+10.4	+11.75	+4.2	+4.74
Junior Football	-1.5	-1.54	-13.4	-13.80
Mini Football	-24.9	-10.95	-31	-13.64
Adult Cricket	-9.1	-17.18	-9.9	-18.61
Junior Cricket	-0.1	-0.18	-12.8	-24.06
Adult Rugby Union	-1	-1.58	-4	-6.32
Junior Rugby Union	-4	-1.5	-6.3	-2.36
Adult Hockey	-3	-2.7	-5.8	-5.22
Junior Hockey	-2	-0.6	-5.8	-1.74

2.2 It is clear from the above evidence and the interests of Pannal Sports Club, (**LCD 95**) that the deficiency of additional junior and mini football pitches should be addressed. As already stated, the deficiency in rugby pitches in the Harrogate area reflects the needs of Harrogate Rugby Union Football Club and also should be addressed.

2.3 The above ‘new’ deficiency in cricket pitches has not arisen from any significant changes to supply and demand since the 2004 District wide assessment. It has arisen from a change in the way the 2008 model calculates peak time deficiencies. The Council will need to look at this ‘modelled’ deficiency in more detail before deciding what needs to be addressed.

2.4 The ‘modelled’ deficiency in hockey pitches reflects the needs and aspirations of the Harrogate Hockey Club for additional facilities.

2.5 The ‘modelled’ surplus of 10 senior football pitches has been based on the availability of 9 pitches on the Harrogate Stray. (An error at the data input stage) In fact only 5

pitches are available for club use now and this is likely to continue in the future. Additional pitches were made available in the past, but small and poor changing rooms and lack of car parking make the use of the Stray unattractive for sports clubs.

- 2.6 This brings down the 'modelled' surplus of senior football pitches to 5 at this present time and down to only just adequate by 2018. Of course, the more demand there is for junior football (as identified through the submission from Pannal Sports Club) and the more pitches provided for juniors, the higher the demand is likely to be for senior pitches in the area. Under these circumstances in the future it is considered inappropriate to adopt a policy of transferring any surplus senior football pitches to junior and mini football use.
- 2.7 In any event, the transfer of senior pitches to junior and mini football is not straightforward or in many cases appropriate. For example, two of the five senior pitches on the Stray are not currently in use on a Saturday and Sunday. The Stray offers limited nearby parking and no off road car parking. This is an important factor from a child safety point of view, especially with the amount of traffic on the adjoining main roads. The Stray changing rooms are very small and cannot cater for the amount of teams presently using the Stray.
- 2.8 The Act of Parliament which protects the Stray prevents the Council from building additional changing rooms or constructing any car parking facilities. Similarly, floodlights, clubhouse and spectator facilities would be prevented from being constructed on the Stray. The mixing of juniors and seniors in the changing room generates child protection concerns.
- 2.9 The Stray is protected for its amenity value not its sporting value or potential. Goalposts have to be erected and dismantled immediately before and after each game. The Stray is not well drained and is not of good quality for junior and mini football. Discussions with the water authority have shown that there are no opportunities to secure drainage outlets and as such it is unlikely that in the future the drainage will be significantly improved to overcome this problem and increase the number of pitches available. All these factors make the use of these two 'surplus' pitches very unattractive for junior and mini football. The Stray is unlikely to offer a suitable location for addressing any deficiency in cricket, rugby and hockey pitches because the same issue apply for these sports as outline above. The Stray is owned by the Duchy of Lancaster.
- 2.10 The need for more and better football pitches and ancillary facilities in the town is exemplified by the recent evidence submitted by Pannal Sports Football Club. The club has submitted to HBC a document identifying their new ground development objectives (**LCD 95**). The District's Playing Pitch Assessment and Strategy, 2004 (Page 32, **LCD59**) referred to the fact that the Junior section of this club were seeking to provide some additional pitches at Pannal School, although this provision was limited and more pitches would be required to meet the clubs needs. Negotiations with Pannal primary school broke down and the document submitted by the whole football club now represents their current position. This is an example of the difficulties of implementing one of the recommendations of the Playing Pitch Strategy, namely that of increasing dual use of educational facilities.
- 2.11 The football club is finding it increasingly more difficult to find suitable facilities for a club that is rapidly expanding with over 500 players, of which 450 are junior players. As stated in their evidence "*Few of the clubs current pitches and training areas are above a 'good' quality (see 'Playing Pitch Strategy' report information in Requirements section), and all current changing facilities are far below acceptable standards.....* **The success and growth of the club is now threatening its long term future**" (Page 26). The evidence submitted details that the need by the club would be 12 mini soccer pitches, 4 small junior pitches, 3 large junior pitches and 2 senior pitches as well as a training area, parking and modern changing facilities. The number of pitches required by this one club are due to FA rules which mean that all

squads at under 11 years of age are split into two teams who play their 30 minute games simultaneously. It is unreasonable therefore to expect more than two matches to be played on a pitch on any one day, particularly as pitches are likely to have been used for training the previous day. This situation is multiplied across the whole District and relates to any pitch. Pannal Sports Football Club have therefore voiced their support for the implementation of the Area Action Plan which they feel will make a significant contribution to sporting provision in the town, addressing problems encountered by various sports clubs.

- 2.12 In conclusion, the need for a Community Sports Regeneration Area in this location is justified by robust and credible evidence in the form of a Playing Pitch Assessment undertaken in accordance with national policy advice and local sports club activities and growth.
- 2.13 The prospect of meeting all of the above sporting needs in a single location was the subject of discussion throughout the consultation on the Core Strategy. There is strong support from the community to provide for these sporting needs in a single and accessible location and three-quarters of respondents to the Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation (**LCD 20**) indicated this support. As part of the questionnaire (**LCD24**) sent to 7 secondary schools in the District, 75% agreed that a single multi-sport arena is needed in Harrogate town. Comments were made that it should be built near schools for easy access or at least where it could be accessed easily by foot, bike etc.
- 2.14 There is also demand for an additional full size artificial sports pitch from Harrogate Hockey Club and Harrogate Rugby Union Football Club. A Tennis Consortium made up of Harrogate Spa Lawn Tennis Club and Yorkshire Real Tennis are working on the development of a multi-rackets sports centre covering lawn tennis, real tennis etc. The main planning benefits behind the project is the need for accessible cost indoor tennis courts in Harrogate and the consortium are actively pursuing locating the facilities within the Community Sports Regeneration Area at Harrogate High School in a partnership agreement with the School.
- 2.15 The evidence highlighted in sections 1 & 2 of this statement combined with the importance of sport, leisure and recreation facilities for the young in the town and District as identified in the Community Plan justifies Policy C3 to establish the primary use of this area for sport and recreation.

### **3.0 Is it feasible and based on sound assumptions having regard to potential constraints and environmental impacts?**

- 3.1 The identification of this Community Sports Regeneration Area followed consideration of potential constraints and environmental impacts. It has had regard in particular to the constraints of traffic/access and landowner objections. None of the land identified in the Area Action Plan (the DPD which is programmed to be adopted after the Core Strategy has been completed) is in Council ownership. The landowners who are Crest Nicholson for the Rugby Club and private landowners have put their land forward as site options for housing in the Local Development Framework and object to the use of their land for sports and recreation. The Council considers, however, that there are strong planning reasons why the development of housing in the Plan area is not in the public interest and that the Plan area should maximise its potential for improved sports facilities. (see Section 8 and 9 above)

- 3.2 It is the Council's view, that building homes in this area is not appropriate because of the;
- lack of suitable alternative sites for the relocation and expansion of HRUFC
  - the long term objective to protect much of the area as an important 'green wedge' helping to safeguard the character of this part of the town (Policies R1 and C10, Harrogate District Local Plan **(LCD17)**)
  - unsuitability of additional residential traffic onto inappropriate residential roads and one of the most heavily congested peak time sections of the A59 (Area Action Plan: Transport Assessment **(LCD86 – Section 7 Page 28)**)
- 3.3 The Council's approach to seeking to maintain and enhance sports use of this land is entirely consistent with the conclusions made by the planning inspector in regard to the 'call-in' inquiry referred to in section 1 above **(NCD13 and NCD14)**. Confirmation of the soundness of Policy C3 would allow the Council to negotiate with private landowners in the area for the purchase of their land for future sports use. It is anticipated that the adoption of Policy C3 will enable the Council to purchase the land at an appropriate land value with the agreement of the landowners. If this is not possible, and as a last resort, the Council would need to consider the use of its compulsory purchase powers.
- 3.4 The congested A59 and other major roads in the area and the residential nature of many of the streets make traffic generation and access a major issue for consideration in the Area Action Plan. The Council commissioned traffic consultants WS Atkins to undertake an assessment of the potential traffic flows emanating from various development proposals in this area. The Transport Assessment **(LCD86)** considered the use of the Rugby Ground for a number of development scenarios, with the constant being the provision of a Harrogate Rugby Union Football Club first team pitch, associated clubhouse, stands and car parking. Additionally, some but not all, of the following are examples of what might be developed alongside these facilities (within the existing footprint of the rugby club ground);
1. Harrogate Town FC could develop its first team pitch adjacent to that of HRUFC
  2. A tennis centre, comprising indoor and all-weather outdoor tennis courts with floodlighting
  3. A five-a-side football centre with floodlighting
  4. Additional rugby pitches with flood lighting
  5. All-weather training facilities, mainly for rugby and football.
- 3.5 One of the most traffic intensive scenarios was the combination of Harrogate Town Football Club and Harrogate Rugby Union Club. In assessing this 'worst traffic case scenario', it concluded that providing two major matches were not being played at the same time, the additional impact on the local road network would be marginal. Otherwise only modest increases in traffic flows and queues compared to the current situation would occur at the Claro Road/A59 Skipton Road junction and the Empress roundabout (A59/A661). Of course Saturday congestion issues would be limited to short periods at weekends/Sat afternoons.
- 3.6 The Transport Assessment concluded that the addition of a tennis centre and additional artificial turf pitches served off Claro Road whether located on the Rugby Ground or the school playing fields would increase the level of traffic but would not have a significant adverse impact on traffic flows in the area.

- 3.7 The Transport Assessment concluded that the land adjacent to Kingsley Drive, if used for public open space including sports pitches should not have a material adverse impact on any of the junctions assessed, namely Skipton Rd/Knaresborough Rd/Wetherby Road, Birtswith Rd/Knaresborough Rd, Leyland Rd/Knaresborough Rd and Rydal Rd/Knaresborough Rd. This is due to the relatively low level of trip generation and the limited peak time duration expected with a development of this kind.
- 3.8 Therefore have in preparing Policy C3 and the Area Action Plan the Council has had due regard to the potential constraints of traffic and landownership.
- 3.9 Concerns were expressed at the Issues consultation stage of the Area Action Plan preparation about the impact of any proposals for this area on flora and fauna. Following receipt of those comments and further consideration of the land to be included within the Area Action Plan, the Council narrowed its consideration of potential sports use to the area south of the existing railway land rather than the whole of the 'Bilton Triangle'. This will reduce the concerns over the impact on local wildlife.
- 3.10 Residential amenity will be affected by the development of a park and sports pitches adjacent to Kingsley Drive. There will be some increase in traffic and there will be a limited increase in noise. Additional floodlighting located within the school playing fields would be seen from the residential properties fronting onto Kingsley Drive. These impacts on amenity are considered acceptable and will be assessed in more detail in the Area Action Plan. A public landscaped park in this area will enhance its amenity value.
- 3.11 Therefore in promoting Policy C3, the Council has had regard to potential constraints and environmental impacts

#### **4.0 Is it appropriate and consistent with national and regional policy?**

- 4.1 Policy C3 is in line with the objectives of PPG17 (**NCD33**) of supporting urban renaissance, promotion of social inclusion/community cohesion, promotion of health and well being and of more sustainable development by encouraging the protection of existing sports and recreational facilities. It provides a unique opportunity to implement the objectives of PPG17 and determine the overriding importance of retaining and enhancing this area for sport and recreation.
- 4.2 The government's drive for sustainable development seeks to improve social conditions of communities. It is national planning policy, PPS1, that new development should improve social conditions wherever possible. The Council consider that the Community Sports Regeneration Area should have a beneficial effect on local social conditions. The wards around Claro Road and Kingsley Drive, Harrogate (Granby and East Central) fall into the bottom 50% in the country in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (DETR 2000). No other wards in the town fall into this category.
- 4.3 PPG17 also encourages the appropriate use of countryside around our towns for sport and recreation and indicates that any new land on which existing sports club relocations are proposed should be at least as accessible to current and potential new users. Appendix 8 and 9 of **LCD78** shows no other sites or areas are as accessible as this area.

- 4.4 PPS7 (**NCD18**) also indicates that planning authorities should aim to secure environmental improvements and maximise the range of beneficial uses of the countryside around urban areas which could include improvement of public access and facilitating the provision of appropriate sports and recreation facilities Policy C3 is consistent with these aims.
- 4.5 PPS1 also advises that development policies should support the promotion of health and well being by making provision for physical activity. Policy C3 is consistent with these aspects of national policy.
- 4.6 Policy C3 is consistent with Policy ENV11 of the Regional Spatial Strategy (**RCD 22**) which aims to improve the health of residents by providing, safeguarding and enhancing facilities for sports and recreation. It is also consistent with Policy ENV 15 Green Infrastructure which promotes the identification of areas of green infrastructure in LDFs to provide networks of accessible, multifunctional sites which link together. (see Para 1.9 above). The protection and enhancement of the Green Wedge presents an opportunity to implement Policy ENV15 and retain the areas openness.

**5.0 Does this policy provide an appropriate strategic framework for the proposed Area Action Plan ?**

- 5.1 Policy C3 provides an appropriate strategic framework for the proposed Area Action Plan, as it is in line with PPS12 (**NCD22**) which states that core strategies should set out broad locations for leisure and community development (paragraph 2.10) as well as priorities for the preparation of area action plans. (paragraph 2.18)

**6.0 Are the relevant partners committed to implementation and able to deliver in the required timescale ?**

- 6.1 Commitment to implementation is difficult until the Core Strategy gives a clear steer on the future land uses in this area. Once Policy C3 has been adopted, the Council can begin to negotiate and discuss with landowners, sports clubs, funding/governing bodies to find the best way forward for an area of land which has been designated as only suitable for sport and recreation land uses. The Community Sports Regeneration Area Action Plan will pursue these issues.

**7.0 Should the Community Sports Regeneration Area be identified on the Key Diagram or Proposals Map?**

- 7.1 It is considered appropriate to identify the Community Sports Regeneration Area on the Key Diagram. PPS12 (Annex A) (**NCD 22**) states that the use of the key diagram is to illustrate the broad strategy for an area and is most likely to be appropriate to an area of significant change which would be appropriate for the Area Action Plan Area.

***Recommended change:***

Add a symbol on the Key Diagram Page 9 to represent the Community Sports Regeneration Area in Harrogate

- 7.2 The identification of the area in a Proposals Map should await the outcome of the AAP.

**8.0 What is the relationship between the Area Action Plan and the Area Plan DPDs?**

- 8.1 The Core Strategy provides the strategic framework for the Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Plan (HKAP) and the Community Sports Regeneration Area Action Plan. The Area Action Plan would be adopted first and form an inset within the later Area Plan. An exception to this would be if issues relating to new land uses or infrastructure come to light as part of the preparation of the Area Plan.

## **APPENDIX A: HARROGATE BOROUGH COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE AGENDA ITEM 6: 27 MARCH 2008**

**PLAN:** 01

**CASE NUMBER:** 07/06055/FULMAJ  
**GRID REF:** EAST 435262  
**NORTH** 455048

**APPLICATION NO.** 6.108.42.FULMAJ

**DATE MADE VALID:** 17.01.2008  
**TARGET DATE:** 17.04.2008

**CASE OFFICER:** Mr R N Watson

**WARD:** Ribston

**APPLICANT:** Harrogate Rugby Thistle Hill Ltd

**AGENT:** Dacre Son And Hartley Planning Unit

**PROPOSAL:** Erection of club house and tractor store, formation of 7 rugby pitches and two vehicular accesses with associated car and coach parking and soft landscaping.

**LOCATION:** Land At Grid Reference 435262 455048 Knaresborough North Yorkshire

### **REPORT**

This is an application to relocate Harrogate Rugby Club to a 10 ha. site in the open countryside designated as Green Belt to the south of Knaresborough.

The submitted details show the provision of 3no. full size pitches; 3no. junior pitches and 1no. training pitch. Dismountable flood lighting would be provided for the training area.

In addition it is proposed to construct a clubhouse of 826sq m. floor area providing changing rooms and toilets, an office, meeting room, bar/cellar, lounge/ clubroom an equipment store. There is parking for 180 cars and 4 coaches.

The application was accompanied by a Planning Case report, a Landscape report and a Transport statement, copies of which are available in the Members room for inspection from 20 March 2008.

### **MAIN ISSUES**

- 1 Land use /principle of development in the green belt
- 2 Landscape issues
- 3 Highway/ sustainability issues

### **RELEVANT SITE HISTORY**

None

### **CONSULTATIONS/NOTIFICATIONS**

#### **The Yorkshire And Humber Assembly**

Consider that the proposal is not of a strategic nature

#### **Economic Development Officer (DDS - EDU)**

No objections

#### **H.B.C Land Drainage**

Recommends that tests be carried out to ensure that soakaways will be effective

#### **EHO Contaminated Land (Springfield)**

Recommends conditions

**Commission For Architecture & Built The Environment**

No comments received at the time of writing the report

**NYCC Highway Authority**

Is concerned about the sustainability and accessibility of the development

**Department Of Community Services**

No comments received at the time of writing the report.

**Landscape Officer**

Objects to the development

**Police Architectural Liaison Officer**

Advises that the security concerns of the police are met before development proceeds

**Sport For England**

No objection

**Yorkshire Water**

No comments received at the time of writing the report.

**Chief Engineer (H and T)**

Considers the site to be highly unsustainable and has a number of concerns about the Transport Assessment

**Knaresborough Town Council (100)**

Knaresborough Town Council

**Parish Council**

PLOMPTON

**Environment Agency**

No objections

**Rural Strategy Officer**

No comments received at the time of writing the report.

**Natural England**

Considers that Birkham Wood SSSI will not be adversely affected

**DCS Arboricultural Officer**

No objections

**Heritage Unit of NYCC**

No comments received at time of writing the report.

**Highway Authority**

No comments received

**Ramblers Association**

Object to this unnecessary and undesirable intrusion in the Green Belt.

**RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY**

PPS1 Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development  
PPG13 Planning Policy Guidance 13, Transport  
LPC02 Harrogate District Local Plan (2001, as altered 2004) Policy C2,  
Landscape Character  
PPG2 Planning Policy Guidance 2, Green Belts

PPG17 Planning Policy Guidance 17, Planning for open space, sport and recreation  
LPA01 Harrogate District Local Plan (2001, as altered 2004) Policy A1, Impact on the Environment and Amenity  
LPHD20 Harrogate District Local Plan (2001, as altered 2004) Policy HD20, Design of New Development and Redevelopment  
LPGB01 Harrogate District Local Plan (2001, as altered 2004) Policy GB1, Extent of Green Belt  
LPR05 Harrogate District Local Plan (2001, as altered 2004) Policy R5, New Sports and Recreational Facilities  
LPR12 Harrogate District Local Plan (2001, as altered 2004) Policy R12, Sport and Recreation Development in the Countryside

### **APPLICATION PUBLICITY**

**SITE NOTICE EXPIRY:** 22.02.2008

**PRESS NOTICE EXPIRY:** 22.02.2008

#### **KNARESBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL - Objects:**

The proposed rugby complex is considered to be excessive development in the open countryside and green belt which would be detrimental to road safety, close to the by pass and a bridle path. The number of parking spaces, flood lights and a clubhouse would have a major and detrimental impact upon the countryside character of this area

#### **PLOMPTON PARISH COUNCIL - Objects**

**OTHER REPRESENTATIONS** - At the time of writing the report 130 letters of support had been received from members and supporters of the Club 18 letters of objection have been received including a petition with 61 signatures.

The principal objections refer to impact on the Green Belt, access and highway issues and unsustainable development in the countryside. Any further representations will be reported to Members at the meeting.

#### **VOLUNTARY NEIGHBOUR NOTIFICATION**

None

### **ASSESSMENT OF MAIN ISSUES**

**1 LAND USE/ PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE GREEN BELT** - The site lies wholly within the green belt which in this particular area separates Harrogate and Knaresborough and is relatively narrow and therefore very sensitive.

Paragraph 1.4 of PPG2: Green Belts states that "the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the most important attribute of Green Belts is their openness"

Paragraph 1.6 of PPG2: Green Belts states that one of the objectives for the use of land within Green Belt is "to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas."

This proposal fulfils the above objective insofar as the pitches provide for outdoor sport, but PPG2 requires the Council to assess whether the new buildings associated with the proposal are appropriate or inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

New buildings can be considered to be appropriate development in the Green Belt, if they are "essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation and which do not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt." Paragraph 3.5 of PPG2 states that these essential facilities should be genuinely required for the uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in it. This paragraph continues by stating that possible examples of such facilities include:

- Small changing rooms or
- Unobtrusive spectator accommodation or
- Small stables for outdoor sport and recreation.

The proposed 826 sq metre clubhouse, is a large building incorporating over 50% of the floor area set aside for social activities that clearly goes far beyond the scale of building envisaged in PPG2 as being 'appropriate' development in the Green Belt. This proposed building represents 'inappropriate' development in the Green Belt.

Furthermore, the proposal includes a large car park for 180 cars and 4 coaches and dismountable flood lighting for the proposed training area. These facilities will contribute to the 'urbanisation' of a significant part of the Green Belt and also represent 'inappropriate' development in the Green Belt.

Such 'inappropriate' development in the Green Belt should not be approved, except in very special circumstances. PPG2 states that very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Therefore, to justify approval under Green Belt policy, the need for Harrogate Rugby Thistle Hill Ltd to relocate to a Green Belt location must be considered to clearly outweigh the harm caused by

- \* The urbanising effect of the proposed buildings, car park and floodlights
- \* The adverse landscape impact identified later in this report
- \* The level of car usage generated by a popular outdoor sports facility in this location (see later in report)

In making this assessment, members must also consider the strength of the case for Harrogate Rugby Thistle Hill Ltd to relocate to this location.

Their case to relocate is summarised below:

- The Thistle Hill proposal is for a considerably smaller development than that
- proposed at the refused Moorlands Farm, Killinghall
- The club has since the Moorlands Farm refusal continued its efforts to find an
- alternative site and confirms the Thistle Hill Site is the only available site at
- this time that meets the search criteria.
- The time left for Crest Nicholson Homes to take 'vacant possession' of Claro
- Road has been confirmed and will be December 2009.
- The RFU will require Harrogate RUFC to notify them in 2008 of their new
- ground for play in the 2009/2010 season in order to guarantee league play.
- The Council's intention of securing the Claro Road area for future rugby
- through the LDF cannot be guaranteed and even if successful, is unlikely to
- deliver playing fields until 4 years after the date the Rugby Club have been
- asked to vacate Claro Road.

Regrettable as the clubs current position is, your officers view is that the above circumstances, when balanced against the long term harm caused fall well short of a case to allow this 'inappropriate' development in the Green Belt.

Furthermore, through the Local Development Framework, the Council is promoting the retention and enhancement of sports facilities on the land in and around the existing club facilities at Claro Road, Harrogate. The Council, on 4 July 2007 in approving Policy C3 of the Core Strategy, made the decision to seek to retain and enhance sport and recreation in this area and the examination into the soundness of the Core Strategy will take place in April/May 2008. The Council has already submitted evidence to the examination that argues strongly that the only suitable location for the rugby club is on the existing site and land adjacent. Thus, whilst the site is allocated for housing (subject to a planning permission to relocate) in

the Harrogate District Local Plan under saved Proposal H4, the Council are in the process of seeking the deletion of this allocation in the new Local Development Framework.

Under these circumstances, the existing Claro Road site and adjoining land will provide a much more accessible/sustainable location for the club than the proposed relocation site in the Thistle Hill Green Belt. This proposal is in conflict with PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation. Paragraph 13 of PPG17 states that relocated sports facilities should be at least as accessible to current and potential users as the existing facilities.

**2 LANDSCAPE IMPACT** - The site lies in a large-scale landscape situated between the valley landscapes of the River Nidd and the River Crimple south of Knaresborough. This is a generally open landscape and fields are large to accommodate intensive farming practices, which have led to the dissolution of hedgerow field boundaries and trees. The site lies adjacent to Birkham Wood, which is a SSSI and Ancient Semi-Natural woodland.

The site is bounded by two TPOs Birkham Wood to the east (01/1957 W7) and a small corner plantation to the southwest (01/1952 G20) that forms part of the southern bypass planting.

The proposals are seen to be contrary on landscape impact and protection objectives to National Guidance, Current and Emerging RSS Policies and Local Development Framework (Saved Policies) as set out below:

Policy A1 of the Local Plan; Impact on the Environment and Amenity; seeks to ensure that development should make a positive contribution to the area by maintaining or improving the quality of the environment or amenity. The development includes parking and buildings which because of their scale and location and compounded by the numerous pitches would be a visual intrusion when viewed from the open countryside to the northeast. There is a central hedgerow running north south through the site but this is a sparse hedgerow and there are large gaps supplemented by fencing. In fact most local hedgerows are generally low and sparse and have little capacity to mitigate the visual impacts of any proposed development and there are few hedgerow trees all contributing to the open character of the site. The development proposes peripheral landscaping which only serves to draw attention to the site and introduces planting into a landscape that is essentially open in character.

Policy C2 of the Local Plan; Landscape Character; seeks to ensure that development should protect existing landscape character. The site lies within Landscape Character Area 56 Plompton and South Knaresborough Arable Land.

The character assessment (Area 56) requires that "Development should be of appropriate scale and material so as not to detract from the character of the landscape". It also recognises that "Settlement between villages is sparse and scattered. Here additional built form should be avoided". The landscape assessment goes on to say, "Where new buildings are required they should be associated with existing farmsteads and located so as not to require new access arrangements". The new clubhouse is sited in an open corner of a large field with no other established settlement or suitable access nearby. By virtue of the sparse hedgerows and open nature of the field the development would be highly visible from the Special Landscape Area that lies to the north. This development will require two new vehicular accesses with associated car parking (approx 180 spaces) and coach parking. The accesses will require the removal of existing hedgerows along the B6163 Thistle Hill, which contain a great variety of species including holly, blackthorn, and viburnum as well as young trees. The hedgerow contributes to the landscape approach to Knaresborough.

PPG2 Green Belts seeks to prevent urban sprawl by restricting inappropriate development and keeping land permanently open. Whilst landscape quality is not a material factor in their designation, Green Belts have an important role to play in retaining attractive areas of countryside. This requires strict control of development in relation to land uses and that only new buildings which are "essential facilities" for these generally open land uses will be allowed. It continues by stating that each application for essential facilities should be considered on its merits to establish or not whether the building is genuinely required. Possible examples for outdoor sport are given as "small changing rooms or unobtrusive

spectator accommodation for outdoor sport, or small stables for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation". The form and bulk of the proposed buildings are out of keeping in their surroundings and inappropriate for the rural area. The Club House is materially larger than the surrounding development and it would be visually intrusive.

Para 3.19 of PPG2 states that "In all cases, the layout, design and landscaping of the scheme must preserve, so far as possible, the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt. The site is pastoral farmland within open countryside characterised by individual dwelling and farm buildings. The siting of the buildings is a 'visual extension' of the urban edge.

Policy HD20 Design of New Development and Redevelopment: protects against development that conflicts with an areas' character and visual quality and the landscape setting and scale of existing buildings. The open nature of the landscape, the uniform land-use and random large fields have resulted in a landscape, which is sensitive to change from inappropriate development on the scale of the proposed clubhouse and its associated parking areas. The clubhouse although a single storey building occupies up to 826m2 and comprises a series of rooms including offices, toilets, meeting rooms, a bar, lounge and club room and therefore the magnitude of impact is heightened because of the scale of the building and its extensive facilities on offer.

The development would cause a detrimental effect on the natural environment through the loss of a large area of valuable countryside that has a function of preserving the special character and setting of the towns of Harrogate and Knaresborough. The seven new rugby pitches occupy two large existing fields and as a result the change from pastoral farmland to that of "mown grass" with associated fencing, goal posts and lighting columns will introduce alien features in the landscape.

### **3 HIGHWAY ISSUES**

Site sustainability/accessibility

National planning policy (PPS1, PPS7, PPG13 and PPG17) requires local planning authorities to place significant weight on the availability and attractiveness of noncar modes of travel when determining proposals for sports facilities attracting participants and spectators.

Paragraph 23 of PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation states that " Where local facilities will attract people from a wider catchment, especially in urban areas, planning permission should not be granted unless they are located where they will be well served by public transport."

The rugby club will attract spectators and participants from a wider than local catchment area and the proposal site is not served at all by public transport. The nearest bus stop is some 800 metres away in Calcutt and a walk to the site along the country road of Thistle Hill Lane would be largely without adequate footpaths and lighting. In any event, the bus service itself is considered inadequate to attract any significant numbers of club users.

During the week (Mon to Fri) the last buses to leave Harrogate and Knaresborough bus stations and arrive at the Union Inn, Calcutt (Service 56/56A) are as follows:

<b>Harrogate Bus station</b>	<b>Union Inn, Calcutt</b>
17.30	17.44
<b>Knaresborough Bus station</b>	<b>Union Inn, Calcutt</b>
17.02	17.04

There are no return buses from Calcutt. It appears from the club's fixture list that they do not currently play matches in the week but if this changed it would not be feasible to travel to and from a match by bus, assuming matches start at around 19.00.

At the weekend, assuming matches take place in the afternoon on a Saturday (there are no services on Sunday) with a match start of around 15.00 it is possible to make a return bus trip

using the 56/57/58 services from Knaresborough and Harrogate bus stations to the Union Inn at Calcutt as follows:

<b>Knaresborough Bus Station</b>	<b>Union Inn, Calcutt</b>	<b>Knaresborough Bus Station</b>
14.02	14.04	
	17.46	17.54
<b>Harrogate Bus Station</b>	<b>Union Inn, Calcutt</b>	<b>Harrogate Bus Station</b>
14.10	14.21	
	17.04	17.22

There are buses throughout Saturday between about 10am and 5.30 pm which would enable travel by bus to the site. From Knaresborough there is an hourly service and from Harrogate the hourly service increases to a half hourly service in the afternoon, but the return journey is only hourly.

The consequence of this very poor access to public transport will be that travel to and from the site will be primarily by car. This is in conflict with national planning policy and was one of the key reasons why the Secretary of State rejected the club's relocation proposal at Moorlands Farm, near Killinghall. This proposal site is more remote than the Moorlands Farm site and less likely to attract people, using public transport or, walking or cycling.

Saved Policy R5 of the Harrogate District Local Plan is the key development plan policy against which to assess the suitability of this proposal. The justification to this specifically refers to the relocation of the rugby club. Amongst other criteria, Policy R5 states that:

"Proposals for the development of new sports and recreational facilities will be permitted provided that:

A)The facility is located in or adjacent to built up areas wherever possible and is well served by public transport.

The proposal is clearly in conflict with criterion A of Policy R5. and criterion C of Policy R12.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is concluded that the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, that would affect the openness of the Green Belt and the reasons for including such land within the Green Belt.

The development would intrude into the attractive open countryside and be harmful to the visual amenities of the area,

The site is in an unsustainable location.

The argument that there is no alternative site available and in the applicants view is on a smaller scale and less harmful than the proposal to relocate to Killinghall are not sufficient grounds to outweigh the strong policy objection of developing in an unsustainable location in the green belt.

Members are reminded that if they are minded not to refuse the application the proposal would have to be referred to the Secretary of State under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Development Plans and Consultation) (Departures) Directions 1999.

Refusal is strongly recommended.

**CASE OFFICER:** Mr R N Watson

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the application be REFUSED. Reason(s) for refusal:-

1 The proposed clubhouse, parking area and floodlights by virtue of its scale and form is inappropriate development and harmful to both the openness and visual amenities of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within the green belt in conflict with national policy guidance in PPG2 and the specific purposes of the designation of Green Belt in this location.

2 The proposed development would be visually intrusive and be harmful to the visual amenities of the area in conflict with Policy A1, C2 and HD20 of the Harrogate District Local Plan.

3 The site lies in open countryside in an unsustainable location generating the need to use private vehicles to access the site in conflict with Policy A1, R5 and R12 of the Harrogate District Local Plan and the national policy guidance in PPG1, PPG13 and PPG17.

4 The site lies in a much less accessible/sustainable location to that where the existing club facilities are located and this is in conflict with national policy guidance in PPG17



