

MINUTES OF A MEETING BETWEEN MEMBERS OF SAUGHALL AND SHOTWICK PARK PARISH COUNCIL AND OFFICERS OF CHESTER CITY COUNCIL'S PLANNING DEPARTMENT held on 19 March 2003 in the Parish Room, 2 Fiddlers Lane, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor A Bailey (in the Chair)
Councillor B Kerr
Councillor RA Storrar

Mr Mike Dix
Mr Mark Dickenson

Apologies: Mr Charles Seward

1 PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

The meeting was held to discuss the planning applications submitted as permissions were necessary to develop the Council's playing field and newly acquired land on Fiddlers Lane into a Golden Jubilee Park and for the Scout Headquarters.

2 SCOUT HUT

Mr Dickenson presented the Clerk with a decision notice in respect of the Scout Hut. Permanent permission had been granted.

3 CHANGE OF USE FROM AGRICULTURAL TO RECREATIONAL
REMOVAL OF HEDGE AND PIPING OF DITCH

(a) Background

On Mr Seward's advice the original planning application had been made. Unfortunately, after a considerable delay it had met with a disappointing and negative response.

The project had moved forward since the application had been made for change of use. The Council now had a detailed layout of the site, to scale.

The Planners were informed of the background to the application, the facilities to be provided and of the sporting organisations in the village who would assist the development through grant applications and benefit from the new facilities being provided.

(b) Cricket Square

Members considered the cricket square. It was noted that STRI had been commissioned to test the soil. Samples had been taken. The existing soil had been satisfactory and it would not be necessary to import any additional earth.

It would be essential to remove some soil, lay a bed of stone and then put the soil back on top. This would ensure a wicket of a high standard. The Cricket Club had requested that an artificial strip was also provided.

The location of the cricket square constrained the layout of the sports pitches. It was imperative to minimise encroachment on to the cricket square by footballers. Consequently, the Council had specified this and the layout had been produced to ensure it as far as possible.

(c) Football Pitches

The layout included three football pitches of the following sizes:

91m x 55m
91m x 45m
70m x 45m

These dimensions would meet the Saughall Colt's requirements. The layout would only work if the hedge was removed. The Planners were asked if they could see the justification for this.

(d) General Planning Issues

Mr Dickenson informed that he had no objection to the principle. A new application must be made but it would incur no additional cost.

(i) Car Parking Provision

Mr Easby of the Cheshire Playing Fields Association had informed that there was room to accommodate 42 car parking spaces on site.

It was noted that car parking provision would be a problem. Car parking in washed over Green Belt was, in accordance with national planning guidance, an inappropriate development. It was important to protect the openness of the Green Belt.

Mr Dickenson advised that it would be necessary to consider the access, soften the proposal and break up the view. He would be able to offer advice on the materials to use etc. He considered that 42 car parking spaces were too many. Local children should be walking/sharing lifts. Consideration should be given to how many spaces were required not how many could be accommodated.

It was suggested that the way forward was to agree to designate a specific area (detailing dimensions) for car parking. It would be helpful to obtain support from the Highway Authority. In the interest of safety, and as children would be transported to use the facilities, it would be appropriate to move the parking off the road onto site.

A dual purpose approach was **AGREED** as the way forward. If a basketball net and/or a 5-a-side all-weather pitch were included in the site layout, when needed these areas could double-up as car parking.

(ii) The Pond

The Council's aim was to dredge and clean up the pond, landscape the area around it and turn it into an environmental feature/picnic area.

Mr Dix told Members that it was best to assume that Great Crested Newts did have a habitat on this land. A survey could be done at this time of year. This process could be expedited by checking the hedgerow. Advice could be obtained from a variety of organisations including the Wildlife Trust, on what could be done to improve the pond. It was **AGREED** to commission a survey and Mr Dix would provide a list of environmentalists capable of undertaking it.

Consideration was also given as to whether or not to fence the pond. It was **AGREED** that it was a risk issue between the Council and its Insurance Company. Environmental improvements would be made but a fence would not allow children to enjoy them.

It was noted, however, that one of the local schools was removing its own pond. It was **AGREED** that the Council would give serious consideration to appropriate safeguards.

(iii) The Hedge

The hedge must be removed if the Council was to make full use of its land and provide the sports pitches required. Draft Local Planning Policy stipulated that all healthy hedgerows should be retained. This was important from a newt habitat point of view. It was noted that it was essential to keep important hedgerows in archaeological terms.

It was **AGREED** to include the hedge on the site layout plan. If, following the survey, it was established that it was a significant hedge the Council would inform the Planning Department with a view to discussing the options available.

Members informed that the Council had planted a hedge last month to the side of the new stock fence it had erected between its land and that of its neighbour.

(iv) Ditch

To make full use of the two parcels of land in the Council's ownership the ditch between them would have to be piped. It was a drainage ditch, not a main drain but it did feed into one.

Mr Dix reported that the Environment Agency had a policy of not culverting ditches unless an exceptional case could be made. It was **AGREED** that Council representatives would seek a meeting with Environment Agency officers at the earliest opportunity to discuss this issue and hopefully obtain consent.

Mr Dickenson informed that Mr Mark Chadwick, the Environment Agency's Planning Liaison Team Leader, was the appropriate officer to contact (01925 840000).

(v) BMX Track/Skateboard Provision

It was **AGREED** that it was important to obtain the planning permission before the Council considered including a BMX track/Skateboard provision on site.

(vi) Perimeter/Boundary

The Council intended to consult neighbours on Long Lane and Fiddlers Lane on the proposed development. It would be necessary to consider the neighbours as appropriate and to show 4m high mesh around boundaries on the layout. This could be retracted or permanent.

Consideration should be given to planting to ensure the neighbour's privacy and security. This was **AGREED** as a reasonable approach to an understandable concern.

(vii) Bowling Green

It was **AGREED** to provide a bowling green on the site.

(viii) Covering Letter

It was **AGREED** to include a comprehensive covering letter with the new application for planning permission setting out the reasoning for what was being included in the development proposal and why.