

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

MAPLEDURHAM PLAYING FIELDS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 MAY 2018

Present:

Councillor I Ballsdon	(Chairman)
Councillor E Hopper	
Rev K Knee-Robinson	Mapledurham Parish Council
Mr N Stanbrook	Mapledurham Users' Committee
Councillor D Stevens	

Also in attendance:

Mr R Bentham	Warren & District Residents' Association
Mr R Bale	CARPS (Catchment Area Residents' Preferred Site)
Mr S Bolton	Caversham & District Residents' Association
Mr C Brooks	Head of Legal & Democratic Services
Mr S Brown	Caversham Trents Football Club
Mr K Macrae	Friends of Mapledurham Playing Fields
Mr D Mander	Caversham Trents Football Club
Ms E Miles	Mapledurham Playing Fields Foundation & Warren & District Residents' Association
Mr B O'Neill	Local Resident
Ms N Simpson	Committee Administrator
Mr B Stanesby	Leisure & Recreation Manager

1. MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 January 2018 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to replacing "more than 5%" with "a net area of at least 10%" in paragraph 8 of Minute 3, to read:

"Nigel Stanbrook also referred to the issue of whether the CC would have to be involved in the disposal of land, noting that the land involved was a net area of at least 10% of the trust's area and that he thought that this would therefore require revision of the charity scheme and involvement of the CC."

Further to Minute 3 (2), Chris Brooks said that he had yet to investigate further with the Charity Commission officers what was meant by the section in the Minutes of the meeting with the Charity Commission on 10 November 2017 about the misunderstanding of the Management Committee's status and role and he would report back to the next meeting.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

2. PROPOSAL TO REPAIR MAPLEDURHAM PAVILION

Ben Stanesby submitted a report on a proposal to undertake structural repairs to the pavilion received from the Mapledurham Playing Fields Action Group (MPFAG). The report also identified how the notice board at the entrance to Mapledurham Playing Fields was managed.

The report explained that an outline proposal to undertake structural repairs to the pavilion at no cost to the Charity had been received from MPFAG on 17 April 2018. Plans and elevations for the proposal were appended to the report.

The proposed work included:

- a) Replacing the front entrance, side kitchen & rear fire doors.
- b) Rebuilding southern external hall & store wall and boarded windows using fibre grain cladding.
- c) Replacing and upgrading corroded steel work, including bracing in existing hall truss roof & steel post support structure.
- d) Existing ceilings removed and replaced in the store and hall, with new suspended ceiling system and lighting grid as described. Store ceiling to be insulated as described.
- e) Existing sills and fascias to be inspected and locally repaired.
- f) Patch repairs to the flat roofs by others as described.
- g) Relaying the terrace.

Discussions between the Council's Corporate Property Manager and MPFAG's architect had been ongoing at the time of writing the report to determine the extent of work required to make the building serviceable. An initial estimate of approximately £35K including VAT had been made for the work. This excluded some items such as roof repairs and glazing and the scope of work was still to be explored. The costs of repairing the pavilion were therefore still to be fully established.

A meeting was scheduled for the morning of 29 May 2018 to confirm more details of the proposal, which was likely to include:

- a) Confirmation of funding sources.
- b) Conditions associated with funding/work.
- c) Who the Trustees had a formal agreement with.
- d) How the work would be managed/overseen.
- e) How the Trustees would be indemnified.

Ben Stanesby reported at the meeting that the meeting between officers and MPFAG had been held earlier in the day in order to clarify these issues, and he was expecting a letter of confirmation from WADRA about what conditions they would require in order to release funds to pay for the proposal for partial repair of the pavilion to allow it to re-open. He said that he understood this was likely to include a guarantee that the pavilion would continue to operate in the long term. It had been noted at the meeting earlier in the day that the proposal would allow the pavilion to be brought back into use without any cost to the Trustee and that the proposal would be considered at the Trustees Sub-Committee on 20 June 2018.

Robin Bentham confirmed at the meeting that WADRA had modified its original position that it would only release its funds if the school proposal did not go forward, as it was felt important to get the pavilion back into operation as soon as possible, and exact details about the conditions for release of the WADRA money were being developed.

Ben Stanesby said that it was not yet known whether the repair works might cause any problems with future refurbishment works on the pavilion, and explained that the intention was to make progress on both the MPFAG proposal and the ESFA proposal, so that, as soon as a strategic decision had been made, the necessary work could be carried out to quantify assurances for MPFAG and WADRA and, if it was feasible, works could be undertaken to the pavilion to enable it to reopen as soon as possible.

The meeting agreed that everyone wanted the pavilion to be re-opened as soon as possible, but it was noted that any works needed to be done prudently to avoid wasting money.

Further to Minute 6 (a) of the previous meeting, the report explained that, from time to time the notice board at the entrance to the playing fields became over full with old and out of date notices or excessive advertisements being attached to it. There might also be occasions when inappropriate notices were added to the board.

It stated that members of the management committee, officers of clubs (and associations) and council employees regularly passed the notice board. The most effective method of managing the notice board would be for these people to keep an eye on the board removing old or inappropriate notices, following a common sense approach. If there was a lack of space, priority on the board should be given to information about activity taking place within the Ground and/or in the Pavilion and other community information relating to the neighbourhood. Any concerns should be reported to the Leisure and Recreation Team.

AGREED:

- (1) That the report be noted;
- (2) That the proposal from Mapledurham Playing Fields Action Group be noted and officers continue to work with MPFAG and WADRA to identify the scope and detail of the proposal and report to the Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee and back to the Management Committee;
- (3) That members of the Management Committee or key stake holders monitor the condition of the notice board and address any concerns to the Leisure and Recreation Team.

3. MAPLEDURHAM PLAYING FIELDS LANDSCAPE MASTERPLAN & DRAFT OPTIONS REPORT

Ben Stanesby submitted a report with, attached, a draft report being prepared for submission to the Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee meeting on

20 June 2018, which presented a Landscape Masterplan for the Playing Fields and an evaluation of the impact on the amenity value of the Ground of three possible options for the future. The draft Master Plan and Draft Options report were being presented to the Management Committee for feedback, to be fed into the Sub-Committee meeting on 20 June 2018.

The draft report explained that the Trustees Sub-Committee meeting on 9 January 2018 (Minute 8 refers) had instructed the officers advising the Trustees:

- (1) to prepare a “masterplan” for the Mapledurham Recreation Ground (‘The Ground’) which identified on an indicative basis how the ESFA lease premium could be applied if the ESFA proposal were to be accepted (in line with the Charity Commission's regulatory advice on this point dated 29 November 2017); and
- (2) to prepare an options report which, taking into account the masterplan, enabled the Sub-Committee to evaluate the impact of the three options on the amenity value of the Ground for beneficiaries of the Mapledurham Recreation Ground Charity (the “Charity”) (again, in line with the Charity Commission's regulatory advice on this point).

In this connection, the draft report explained that the three options were:

- the status quo;
- the ESFA proposal; and
- the Fit4All proposal made by the Mapledurham Playing Fields Foundation.

It also explained that:

- (1) The Sub-Committee had previously concluded that, in principle, the ESFA proposal was capable of enhancing the amenity value of the Ground and that, if finally accepted by the Sub-Committee, would make available a lease premium of £1.36M from the ESFA which could be applied for the improvement and enhancement of the Ground; and
- (2) The Council's Planning Applications Committee had granted planning consent to the ESFA proposal on 4 April 2018 subject to a number of conditions, including a Section 106 Agreement for the payment of an additional £375k to mitigate the negative impact of The Heights Free School being relocated to the Ground. This additional £375k was payable by the ESFA in addition to the lease premium identified above and had to be applied to pay for the works of mitigation identified by the Planning Applications Committee.

The following documents were attached to the draft report:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Appendix A: | Landscape Master Plan - Mapledurham Playing Fields |
| Appendix B: | Report on Results of Mapledurham Playing Fields public consultation, <i>Have your Say</i> , Summer 2017 (including the Mapledurham Playing Fields Foundation (“MPFF”) ‘Fit4All’ proposal (at Appendix 6)) |

Appendix C: Equality Impact Assessment

In the light of the Planning Applications Committee's decision to grant permission for The Heights Free School envisaged by the ESFA proposal, the ESFA proposal included both a £1.36M consideration payment to improve and enhance the Ground, and a £375k payment for the mitigation of the development of The Heights Free School. Therefore, a total of £1.735M was available to the Sub-Committee for mitigation and improvement works.

The Landscape Master Plan provided more details of the mitigation and improvement works, including costs.

The draft report stated that the Landscape Master Plan had been shared, on 14 May 2018, with organisations who historically had used the Ground, including the Pavilion. These included: the Warren & District Residents' Association, Caversham Trents Football Club, Mapledurham Lawn Tennis Club, Warren and District Residents' Association, Mapledurham Tennis Club, Magikats After-school, Soul Ball, Escape Toddler Group, Bridge Club, Spikey Club, 69th Scout Group, Friends of Mapledurham Playing Fields, and Mapledurham Playing Fields Action Group. It also stated that the plan had been presented to the Management Committee on 29 May 2018, and that the feedback from this round of consultation would be reported to the Sub-Committee meeting.

In paragraph 5, the draft report considered each of the three options for the future of the Ground - the ESFA Proposal for relocation of the Heights Free School, the Status Quo and the Fit4All Proposal - and made an assessment as to which would best enhance the amenity value of the Ground for the beneficiaries of the Charity.

The Landscape Master Plan had been drawn up with direct reference to the results of the *Have Your Say* public consultation exercise, undertaken with beneficiaries in summer 2017, and had itself been the subject of consultation with stakeholders and partners, as described above. The proposals in the Landscape Master Plan had been informed by the availability of capital funding of £1.735M flowing from the ESFA proposal for mitigation and improvement works to the Ground. This funding was subject to the Sub-Committee agreeing the option to dispose of 1.231 acres of land at Mapledurham Playing Fields to the ESFA for the re-location of The Heights Free School to the site, and the Council (as trustee of the Ground) entering into a unilateral undertaking with the ESFA to enable the Section 106 Agreement to be concluded. That decision would be addressed in another report to the Sub-Committee.

The draft report asked the Sub-Committee to consider which of the options for the future of the Ground it considered was in the best interests of the Charity and its beneficiaries, having regard to the Charity Commission's regulatory advice dated 20 November 2017 and the provisions set out in the Landscape Master Plan at Appendix A (as regards the ESFA proposal) and the Fit4All proposal within Appendix B.

If the Sub-Committee concluded that the ESFA proposal continued to be the preferred option for the Ground in the best interests of the Charity then the draft report also asked the Sub-Committee to:

- (1) agree the mitigation works to the Ground to be funded through the £375k Section 106 agreement (set out in paragraph 4.2 of the draft report);
- (2) agree the improvements and enhancements to the Ground to be funded through the £1.36M consideration payment from the ESFA (set out in paragraph 4.8); including one of two options to improve the Mapledurham Pavilion (set out in paragraph 4.9);
- (3) agree the commencement of preparatory work (set out in paragraph 4.14) to facilitate a timely implementation of the mitigation and improvement works before the school moved to its site in the Grounds in September 2020; and
- (4) note that these mitigation and improvement works would require the closure of large sections of the Grounds for the duration of the works.

Paragraph 4.2 of the draft report stated that the Landscape Master Plan identified a series of mitigation works that were required to be undertaken to offset the negative impact of the development of The Heights Free School at the Ground. These mitigation measures were to be undertaken by Reading Borough Council, funded from the £375k Section 106 planning gain arising from the relocation of the School.

These included:

- a) Upgraded driveway from Woodcote Road.
- b) Improved pedestrian and vehicle access to Playing Fields from car park.
- c) Resurfacing existing car park, and provision of 4 disabled parking bays.
- d) School Multi-Use Games Area available outside school hours at no charge.
- e) New cycle stands.
- f) New fencing and gates to fields from car park.
- g) Children's play area re-provided.
- h) Existing basketball court returned to grass.
- i) Re-grading of sports turf areas.
- j) Drainage to the northern section of the western sports turf area.
- k) Breedon gravel path from Chazey Road to pavilion.
- l) Boundary footpath around western side of playing fields.
- m) Replacement of furniture lost in reconfiguration.
- n) Replacement tree planting (Liquidambar) avenue along axial path.

Paragraph 4.8 of the draft report stated that the following enhancements had been identified to be undertaken as a core improvement within the landscape plan, reflecting the results of the consultation, in the total sum of £286k:

1. Extending drainage across the whole of the western sports turf area (Pitch 1) (£94k).
2. Extended play area (£25k).
3. Formalised boundary treatment on Hewett Avenue (£12k).
4. Additional benches (£11k).
5. Fitness trail (£18k).
6. Entrance improvements (ground reinforcement, signage, gate posts) (£5k).
7. Tree planting (5 specimen trees) (£2k).

8. Maintenance funding for capital work (eg roof replacement) (£100k).
9. Landscaping around the pavilion to create an area of visual interest or continuation of parkland features (eg avenue) (£25k).
10. Surveys and fees (planning, Archaeology etc) (£40k)

The draft report stated that the option to provide a floodlit artificial turf pitch (ATP), while supported, also attracted slightly more negative comments. This option would need further consideration in the future and was beyond funds currently available.

Paragraph 4.9 of the draft report stated that there were two options for improving the Mapledurham Pavilion.

OPTION A:

Refurbish the changing rooms, meeting room and toilets (incorporating disabled toilet). Demolish the hall and ancillary facilities. Rebuild the hall and ancillary facilities but with a smaller hall 80m² size. This would require both planning permission and building control applications.

The avenue of trees running through the Ground might be extended to the main car park. The School hall would provide facilities for the larger events that were occasionally run within the Pavilion.

The estimated cost was £925k.

OPTION B:

Refurbish the Pavilion throughout, retaining existing layout and therefore only requiring a building control application. Previous proposals had identified undertaking work to areas requiring most work and returning to undertake further refurbishments subsequently. The proposed option would deliver a Pavilion as close to “as new” as possible, providing the associated benefits in the costs of maintenance. These costs had been produced by external quantity surveyors.

A landscaped area would be developed at the end of the avenue of trees to produce a focal point and area for relaxation.

The estimated cost was £825k.

Paragraph 4.12 of the draft report explained that, depending on which option for the Pavilion was chosen, £104k (Option A) or £204k (Option B) would be left for further improvements/enhancements. The Landscape Master Plan identified a number of options as to how these funds could be utilised:

- a) Install pedestrian lighting along the main path from Chazey Road towards the Pavilion. (£30k)
- b) Extend the car park to support use of both the Pavilion and Ground. Possible options to provide 12 additional spaces:

- (i) Extend car parking into area north of the School site with tarmac for 12 Cars (£45k)
- (ii) Alternatively extend car parking into area north of the School site with reinforced turf/Grasscrete to allow the area to be used for occasional overflow parking (£35k)
- c) Extend the Pavilion to provide two additional changing rooms to support use of the second adult pitch (£197k)
- d) Allocate unspent funds to support funding applications to improve facilities by either the Council as Trustee or partner organisations. This could include new changing rooms, an artificial turf pitch, changing facilities or other recreational facilities. This would allow further funding to be levered into improving facilities.

Ben Stanesby gave a presentation on the masterplan, giving more explanation of the options set out above.

Steve Brown, Club Secretary for Caversham Trents FC (CTFC), addressed the Management Committee, highlighting key points from the CTFC's response to the consultation proposal (set out in an appendix to the Users' Report - see Minute 4 below), and the points made included:

- The CTFC Committee objected to the school proposal because it failed to deliver an ATP to mitigate the loss of pitches and/or substantially enhance the amenity value of the playing fields, and this objection had been backed by members in a vote.
- Fit4All should be pursued, but if a school was to be built, then Option B should be pursued.
- Extension of the car park should be a priority.

Nigel Stanbrook went through the comments of users on the draft Landscape Masterplan, which were detailed in the appendices to the Users' Report (see Minute 4 below). He stressed the importance of the users' comments being considered by the Sub-Committee and Ben Stanesby said that it was intended to attach all the responses from stakeholders in full to the Sub-Committee report and address them in the report. Nigel Stanbrook summarised some of the users' comments and noted certain points, including:

- Elisa Miles had made extensive detailed comments on the masterplan in her response.
- WADRA comments: The plan created disruption and dislocation of the recreational activities for a protracted period; it was missing information about the school's hours and days of operation; the planting plans omitted mitigation for the loss of the 100 or so mature trees; the pavilion should remain the focal point and not be hemmed in by the playground; the plan did not offer a scale of magnitude for how well the issues were mitigated or enhanced.

- CTFC comments: Sport England said the proposal did not currently adequately meet the exceptions set out in Sport England's policy; there shouldn't be any fencing of pitches outside the school grounds.
- FOMPF comments: The revised layout of football pitches had a devastating impact on the mature trees and the landscape plan sacrificed mature trees. The avenues should be native trees, not ornamental, and there were no indicative costs for the avenue or additional planting. They did not want additional planting in The Clumps, and they wanted to create a woodland area in the oval on their plan.
- MPFAG comments: They opposed the school plan and, without a business plan, how could they judge its sustainability? There was no mention of a Deed of Dedication and where was the compensatory land? They had concerns for the car park management and how this would be operated. Their view was that the plan was almost entirely mitigation and not enhancements for the users.
- MPFF comments: They felt that whether or not to accept the proposal to build the school could not properly be decided until the Community Use Agreement had been proffered and ratified.

The recommendations to the Management Committee within the covering report were:

- 2.1 That the Management Committee should consider whether the Landscape mitigations and core enhancements were appropriate (as identified in section 2.2 (2) and 2.2(3) of the accompanying draft options report).
- 2.2 That the Management Committee should consider which of the two options for the pavilion and further enhancements should be preferred (as identified at section 2.2(4) of the accompanying draft options report).
- 2.3 Following consideration of these items (2.1 and 2.2 above), the Management Committee should consider which of the three options: the ESFA proposal and accompanying Landscape Plan, the Fit4All proposal or the status quo should be preferred (set out in section 2.1 of the draft options report).

The Management Committee discussed the recommendations and the members expressed their views.

Recommendation 2.1 - Whether the Landscape mitigation and core enhancement works set out in para 4.2 of the masterplan report and improvement and enhancement works set out in para 4.8 of the masterplan report were appropriate:

- Hopper - The mitigation works in para 4.2 were ok, except he did not support the liquidamber trees, as FOMPF preferred native species. He had no problem with the ten enhancements in para 4.8.
- Stevens - The mitigation works seemed acceptable, rather than "appropriate".

- Stanbrook - He said that some Users views were that there should have been more items included in the mitigations rather than enhancements or further enhancements, so these points should be made to the Sub-Committee.

The Management Committee therefore did not have a joint view to present to the Sub-Committee on these, as the members of the Management Committee had differing views.

Recommendation 2.2 - Which of the Options A and B for the pavilion in para 4.9 of the masterplan report should be preferred and then which further enhancements in para 4.12 should be preferred.

There were mixed views from members of the Committee:

- Hopper - Thought Option B was preferable to Option A. It was cheaper, therefore additional benefits were possible. He wanted the hall to stay the same size and on the same footprint.
- Stanbrook - Preferred Option B, plus other options if they were available on re-opening the pavilion.
- Knee-Robinson - Thought Option A was preferable as it gave more options in future and more space, so was better for future use.
- Stevens - Thought Option B was preferable but did not see why they had to choose, as both looked possible - he was undecided.
- Ballsdon - She would like to see the hall being the same size and would like to see modern provision, but wanted to avoid it being a short term fix - she was undecided.

However, all wanted to have at least the same size hall in the pavilion, make the best use of the available money, and reopen the pavilion as soon as viable, but not just as a short term fix.

The Committee noted all the further enhancement possibilities in para 4.12, but Councillor Ballsdon noted that the extension of the car park into the area north of the school site would be welcomed by CTFC, but the residents living there did not share that opinion, Keith Knee-Robinson did not support the lighting, and Nigel Stanbrook said that users felt there should be more items included as mitigation, rather than enhancements or further enhancements. The Management Committee therefore did not have a joint view to present to the Sub-Committee on these, as the members of the Management Committee had differing views on Options A & B.

Which of the 3 options - either the ESFA proposal & landscape plan, the Fit4All proposal or the status quo - should be preferred:

Status Quo - It was agreed that none of the Committee supported this.

Fit4All proposal:

- Stanbrook - This would satisfy and meet the Users' requests without the school, and the users would prefer it.
- Knee-Robinson - He supported this with caveats as he did not think the proposal was right for the future.
- Stevens - He did not think the Management Committee should pre-empt the Sub-Committee's decision.
- Hopper - He did not support the Fit4All proposal, as officers had identified significant issues with the proposal in terms of ongoing viability.
- Ballsdon - She did not support the Fit4All proposal as it "did not stack up".

ESFA proposal:

- Stevens - He did not think the Management Committee should pre-empt the Sub-Committee's decision.
- Hopper - He supported the ESFA proposal, with money available for the playing fields in the long term.
- Ballsdon - She supported the Sub-Committee going with the ESFA proposal.

Regarding the landscape masterplan:

- Keith Knee-Robinson suggested that the security of the site, especially at night time, should be considered. Currently the car park was often used up until 2am and vandalism of the pavilion had been carried out at that time. It would be sensible to secure the site with a barrier or gate, as at Albert Road recreation ground. Ben Stanesby said that he would give this consideration for inclusion in the Sub-Committee report.
- The meeting considered the position of the playground, and it was suggested that it could be moved further to the east than shown on the plan, to prevent reduction of the view from the pavilion, as long as it did not impinge on the footpath or cause noise problems to people living to the east of the playing fields. Ben Stanesby indicated that the playground could probably be moved further east and this would be considered.
- Concern was expressed about the possible impact of roots from the proposed tree-lined path on the nearby football pitches

AGREED:

- (1) That the reports, and the fact that the Management Committee did not have an overall joint view to present to the Sub-Committee on the masterplan and draft options report, be noted;
- (2) That the differing views of the members of the Management Committee, as set out in the points above, be recorded, and

considered by officers as they took work forward and finalised the masterplan for submission to the Sub-Committee;

- (3) That Councillor Ballsdon address the Mapledurham Playing Fields Trustees Sub-Committee meeting on 20 June 2018 as Chairman of the Management Committee, presenting the views of the members of the Management Committee on the report.

4. MAPLEDURHAM PLAYING FIELDS USERS REPORT

Nigel Stanbrook tabled a report on behalf of Users of Mapledurham Playing Fields and Pavilion. The report had appended detailed responses to the draft Landscape Master Plan, which formed part of the users' report, from Robin Bentham (WADRA), Elisa Miles (WADRA & Mapledurham Playing Fields Foundation), Steve Brown (Caversham Trents Football Club), Steve Ayers (Friends of Mapledurham Playing Fields), Gordon Watt (Mapledurham Playing Fields Foundation) and Martin Brommell (MPFAG), which had also been considered in the agenda item on the master plan above.

The report also stated that the toddlers' playground needed clearing of weeds and long grass and Ben Stanesby said that he would investigate.

AGREED:

- (1) That the report be noted;
- (2) That Ben Stanesby investigate the situation with regard to clearing the toddlers' playground of grass and weeds.

5. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

AGREED: That the next meeting be organised by email when needed.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 9.05pm)