

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

14 DECEMBER 2021

Agenda Item 6. Questions from members of the public

1. From Mr Daniel Kuszel

“The Council's discussion of a new leisure centre at Cranleigh is welcome, although £20 million is almost 4 times the price of the leisure centre built in Godalming only 9 years ago. Why is the proposed price so expensive? Additionally, it has been known by the authority since 2018 that Godalming Leisure Centre has vastly outperformed its estimated revenue, with the facility significantly oversubscribed. Additional facilities are needed for the centre. If Cranleigh is to benefit from a new leisure centre at a cost of £20 million, Haslemere enjoying the benefit of 2 leisure centres, why is no money available to expand Godalming Leisure Centre, a town twice the size of Haslemere that has already exceeded its allocation of new housing under the Council's Local Plan 11 years ahead of schedule?”

Response from Councillor Liz Townsend, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Leisure and Dunsfold Park

Thank you for your question. We as an administration are very pleased to be in a position to present a viable business proposal for a new Cranleigh Leisure Centre. The leisure centre is 52 years old and has far exceeded its life expectancy and we are therefore, at a point where Council has to make a critical decision regarding the future of leisure provision in the Cranleigh area. The proposal for a new facility is based on a combination of cost proposals from the consultants, Sport England guidance and local leisure operator experience. In addition to Cranleigh being a larger site, with more facilities than Godalming, there has been a significant amount of change since Godalming Leisure Centre was built in 2012 so a direct comparison, as you suggest, does not give an accurate picture. The challenges of an increase in construction costs (labour and materials), a global pandemic and a corporate commitment and responsibility to reduce carbon emissions has resulted in an increase to the updated costings.

The Council must consider the entire leisure stock and prioritise where finance is spent to ensure that the facilities meet the demands of the local community. Cranleigh Leisure centre is over 50 years old and Farnham Leisure Centre is over 40 years old and as you highlighted Godalming is only 9 years old. However, a redevelopment of the Godalming Leisure Centre, to accommodate the public demand, is still very much in mind and we are awaiting a decision from the Department for Education regarding the release of school land to enable the project to move forward. The pandemic has had a substantial impact on the leisure industry, and it is imperative that we review all business decisions to ensure that the projects still remain viable. Once we have received approval from the DfE to proceed we will conduct such a review accordingly.

2. From Mr Mike Baudry

“The Council is aware of Haslemere Town Council’s representations that it supports the allocation of the Royal School within LPP2 but only on the basis of a ‘limit of development of 90 units only, being on land on which there were **previously constructed buildings or hardstanding**.’ The Leader confirmed at the Full Council meeting on 22nd September 2021 that he had responded to and would continue to listen to the community of Haslemere, as represented by HTC and its Neighbourhood Plan. It is concerning that the Officer’s report on LPP2 accompanying this evening’s meeting does not propose any amendments to the Royal School allocation in reflection of the requirements of the Town Council. The Town Council are clear that no development over the playing fields and green spaces of the site, being wholly within the AONB, must be permitted. Please can Members amend the description of the Royal School allocation to reflect the Town Council’s position.

Further Haslemere Vision has also now stated that the numbers proposed at the Royal School site seem high.”

Response from Councillor Andy MacLeod, Portfolio Holder for Planning

“Waverley is aware that that Town Council has commented on the Addendum to LPP2 that they feel the dwellings proposed in the housing allocation for the Royal Junior School should be accommodated within the existing built-up area of the site and also that Haslemere Vision have stated that the numbers seem high. However, both the Town Council and Haslemere Vision are clear in their general support for the allocation of this site for housing. Whilst it is in the AONB, the site is classed as previously-developed land, it already has a number of buildings and areas of hardstanding on it, and is visually very well screened. The evidence that the Council has gathered concludes that there is a low to medium sensitivity to development in landscape terms. Taking these matters into account, Waverley considers that the number of dwellings proposed for the site in Local Plan Part 2 is appropriate and there is no need to change the allocation. It is recognised that it will not be possible to design an acceptable scheme for this number of units that is solely contained within the footprint of the existing buildings and hard surfaced areas. However, the Council is confident that the character of the site, its size and degree of natural screening are such that a well-designed scheme for the quantum of development as proposed in the Addendum to LPP2 can be accommodated without having an adverse impact on the countryside and AONB.”