



FOHC OPEN MEETING - NOTES

28 July 2010, Ardagh Bowling Club, Horfield Common

“The Ardagh should be the jewel in the crown of Horfield Common” - Cllr. Cheryl Ann

Overview

More than 160 people attended this meeting (162 individuals signed- in) to discuss the current *'Area Green Space Plans (AGSP) Ideas and Options paper for Horfield and Lockleaze'* and the associates *'Site Allocations and Development Management Options (SADMO) Consultation'* documents which propose the sale of Wellington Hill Playing Field for development, and the potential demolition of, or partial demolition of the Ardagh Tennis Courts, Bowling Green and ancillary facilities.

These notes should be read along with FOHC's response to the AGSP and separate response to the SADMA, which will be forwarded to Bristol City Council as part of the consultation process. These responses contains significant further detail about FOHC's views about (and objections to, where relevant) the AGSP proposals for the Horfield Common (including the Ardagh) area, and also detail the reasons for FOHC's objection to the disposal of Wellington Hill Playing Field for development, through the SADMO consultation process.

Meeting

The following provides an overview of the meeting, discussion points and issues raised. The notes include actions agreed on by FOHC following the meeting, in order to try to move some of the issues raised forward.

1. Without exception - all people attending the meeting opposed the sale of Wellington Hill Playing Field for development. The use value of the field stated in the AGSP, and consequently in the SADMOS documentation ('little used other than by dog walkers for most of the week') was challenged by all those attending, including representatives of Horfield Young People's Club and 62nd Bristol Scouts who use the field weekly on numerous evenings and many other residents who use the field for recreational activities throughout the year.

To understand how this vast disparity in perceptions of the use of the field has occurred, attendees wanted the Council to respond to the following questions:

1.1. Who were the 'Stakeholders' who were consulted in drafting the AGSP document?

Whilst FOHC was invited to a number of meetings during the stakeholder participation phase of the AGSP development for the Horfield and Lockleaze areas, none of the leaders of any of the groups who use the field for activities on a weekly basis have been consulted or asked to provide any information about their usage of the field with a wide range of groups. Horfield Parish Church Hall adjoins the field and opens out directly onto it. Horfield Parish Church Hall functions as a community centre – it has a wide-range of groups who meet for sessions there throughout the year – including 'Welly Tots' – Mums and Toddlers Group, Playgroups, Dog Training Groups, Brownies, Guides, Rainbows, Youth Clubs, Drama Groups and others. All of these groups use the field during their sessions – and have used it consistently without challenge for many years - and would not be able to continue their activities without being able to use it. The groups meeting in the Church Hall include extensive programmes of work with young people from the ages of 4-18 years – there is a youth group (Horfield Young People's Club/Geoff's Club) which has been meeting in the hall on a Friday evening every week since 1975, and which has had the same leader throughout this time.

Manor Farm Boys Club which is located opposite the field has been using it 2-3 times per week continuously for more than 40 years.

The 62nd Bristol Scout Troop's meeting hut is located in the field itself; they use the field throughout the year for their activities, and have been doing so for more than 70 years.

1.2 At what times of day, on which days of the week, and over what period of time was the usage of the field monitored for?

The proposition that Wellington Hill Playing Field is 'no longer required as Open Space' was challenged by all respondents to a recent FOHC questionnaire, (distributed following publication of the AGSP). Respondents detail significant usage of the field for a broad-range of activities by a wide-range of age and interest groups. Respondents questioned the validity and transparency of the process by which the field was deemed to fit the criteria for disposal through the AGSP, and FOHC consider that the analysis of the usage of the field is flawed.

Attendees at the meeting echoed the above - detailing significant usage of the field for a broad-range of activities including those of 62nd Scout Troop, Horfield Young People's Club and Manor Farm Boys Club. Attendees strongly contested the statement made in the AGSP (and consequently in the SADMO) that the field is little used for most of the week other than by dog walkers and wholly oppose the proposal to dispose of the field for development.

*It is to note that respondents' feedback in the FOHC questionnaires state that local people have had access by right to the land since prior to the Second World War.

1.3 If it is the case that the information stated in the AGSP regarding the use of Wellington Hill Playing Field is factually incorrect (and therefore potentially misleading to those outside of the locality who are considering, and commenting on, the proposals as part of a joined-up city-wide strategy) how can this be addressed to ensure that any decision made regarding the future of the site is informed by accurate information and that this potential misinformation is not detrimental to the outcome of the consultation process in relation to Wellington Hill Playing Field?

2. Many attendees were frustrated that they had not been offered the opportunity to input into the development of the AGSP plans and, in addition to the above, asked specifically why residents have not been sent information about the AGSP and SADM0 proposals? In the same week that this meeting took place, all households in Bristol had received letters about the availability of financial support for insulating houses from BCC.

2.1 Why hasn't information about the AGSP been sent to local residents and dissemination of these consultations prioritised? Many attendees stated that they only knew about the proposals via FOHC notices posted locally. In view of the significant impact that these proposals could for all residents of the local area – this was considered to be deeply unsatisfactory.

3. Many attendees at the meeting voiced frustration and anger that previous attempts to secure funding for development of the Ardagh to enable the facilities to remain fit-for-purpose has not been followed through and/or joined up.

3.1 How can Ardagh Bowls Club's Business Planning work (submitted repeatedly to the council following their requests for this) be capitalised on and made use of/actioned to support the development and maintenance of the Ardagh facilities? There is a proposal included in the AGSP for a masterplan to be drawn up for the Ardagh. Who will be invited to contribute to this? Why have the Ardagh Bowling Club been asked to undertake and complete this business planning work if it is not going to be used by the Council to inform decisions about the Ardagh?

How is the proposed masterplan (in the AGSP) for the Ardagh going to be developed, and over what period of time? How will the council ensure that local people's voices are heard and views listened to in the development of this?

It was noted that the facilities on Horfield Common (including the play area and the Ardagh) have been deteriorating for more than a decade without maintenance by the council. How much longer do members of the local community have to wait to actually see any of the proposed improvements to the area? Why has this perceived neglect by BCC been able to continue for such a long time? The suggestion that the local community should now lose facilities, rather than them being both retained, and significantly improved was strongly opposed by attendees at the meeting.

3.2 . What has happened to the work previously undertaken by the Council, the LTA, Tennis groups who use the Ardagh and the Ardagh Bowling Club, to explore development of the facilities and improvement of the tennis courts to bring them back to competition standard? Why has this not been pursued?

Are the LTA still interested in the Ardagh? If so – how can we pursue this & join this up with plans to develop and maintain the facilities? How will the Council be able to support these ambitions? Specifically in view of the current rhetoric around 'bringing in external funding' to support the provision of facilities – how might the council lend support? Does the council have the capacity to lead on this, or would it be local organisations who would need to drive any such development/achievement?

It was noted that The Ardagh used to host competitive tennis tournaments and could be a hub for tennis within the city (**NOTE** Please see FOHC response to the AGSP for full details of this).

The Ardagh meets all of the criteria for a Hub Site, yet is not being identified as one, despite appearing to be located in the only areas of the city that are not served by one of the currently proposed/identified Hub Sites in the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) (published 2008). It is to note that failure to consider the Ardagh as a potential Hub Site appears to place

residents in this area of the city at a significant disadvantage from all other residents of the City of Bristol in terms of sports provision. It does appear from the mapping information included in the PPS that many residents in this area will be the only residents in the city not to be provided with a Hub Site within the Council's own specified acceptable distance of a 3000m radius.

It was noted that the LTA have invested over £250,000 in tennis facilities at Redland and those attending the meeting voiced significant frustration that the Ardagh's potential to meet a wide-range of agendas, to contribute fully to BCC's own stated ambitions for sports provision in the city, and to potentially be able to access external funding to support this is not being supported, or even identified in the AGSP.

This is a significant concern which led attendees to question the transparency and validity of the consultation process. Attendees were concerned that it appeared that decisions have already been made about the future of facilities and the priorities for the AGSP (for example a number of the elements being consulted on for the Horfield and Lockleaze area AGSP have already been actioned and delivered by the council e.g installation of mile markers on Horfield Common near the sports centre and installation of new seating on Horfield Common).

ATTENDEES UNDERLINED THEIR STRONG OPPOSITION TO ANY LOSS OF SPORTS OR RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AT THE ARDAGH AND WELLINGTON HILL PLAYING FIELD but supported proposals for the improvement of the Ardagh and play area on Horfield Common near the Ardagh.

There was concern that the location of the Ardagh between Neighbourhood Partnership areas has resulted in detrimental treatment and consideration of needs for facilities as it does not sit centrally in any one NP area. See point 10 below for fuller discussion of this.

3.3 It was noted that Section 106 monies secured from developers of housing in the local area (Hawkswood House and Concorde Lodge were noted as sites relevant to this) has not been spent on facilities for Horfield Common.

3.4 Where is that Section 106 money? Has it been spent on other areas? If not, where is it held?

3.5 How much money generated through Section 106 agreements is relevant to the Horfield Common and Ardagh Area, and how can it be accessed before it is 'clawed back' by the developers?

3.6 What are the deadlines for any monies to be claimed?

NOTE: Cllr. David Willingham had contacted the council and confirmed (by the end of the meeting!) that there is money held by the council relevant to Horfield Common and the Ardagh area, which has been generated through Section 106 agreements. He is going to confirm how much this is (specifically in relation to Hawkswood House & Concord Lodge developments) and how it can be accessed/applied for to support the development and maintenance of the facilities at the Ardagh and children's playground.

4. The suggestion that Wellington Hill Playing Field and The Ardagh could be considered under the asset transfer scheme was proposed and the example of the YMCA land at the back of Golden Hill was suggested as an example.

ACTION: Contact details for local residents involved in that were given to FOHC at the end of the meeting & this will be followed up.

- 4.1 How much would it cost to purchase Wellington Hill Playing Field from the Council? Is this possible?
- 4.2 What are the legal implications of ownership of an asset such as this?
- 4.3 What consortia of local groups would need to be involved in this process, in order to ensure protection of the site and continued provision of access for all?

5. The 'temporary road' that has been put up on Wellington Hill Playing Field to enable access by the developers of the Concord Lodge site to there is considered by attendees at the meeting to be intrusive and inappropriate.

How much longer the 'temporary' road across Wellington Hill Playing Field is going to be there was questioned by attendees at the meeting, and the suggestion made that members of the local community should monitor this.

There was significant concern from those attending the meeting that the road would simply be left in place whilst the AGSP consultation takes place and used as a justification as to why Wellington Hill Playing Field could be considered as a site for disposal.

- 5.1 When is the temporary road on Wellington Hill Playing Field approved until?
- 5.2 Are the developers obliged to return the field to a usable grass surface for games etc? (and if not, why not – it will take years for the field to recover naturally)
- 5.3 Might the developers be approached and asked to provide new Football Goal Posts and relatively inexpensive pitch/white-lining equipment that could be managed, used by and maintained by the Scouts/HYPC/MFBC so that the field can be used for football games again?

Would the developers be prepared to fund this, in addition to the Section 106 contribution that they have had to make? (Cllr. Pete Levy agreed to approach the developers with this proposal) If not, can some of the Section 106 funds be used to do this?

How much would this cost?

Can BCC pay for this?

6. Members of the Ardagh Bowls Club have been maintaining the facilities at the Ardagh, unpaid, for a number of years. They have repaired the pavilion building,

maintain the Bowling Green and lock and unlock the premises. They do not have a lease for the building, nor any security for their future as a club. The Bowling Green is falling into disrepair following the loss of the groundsman/greenkeeper from the Ardagh. This is unsatisfactory. Despite repeated meetings and agreements with a variety of staff from BCC, this remains unresolved and is becoming urgent to prevent further deterioration of the centre.

(Cllr. Cheryl Ann agreed to pursue this lease issue at BCC)

- 6.1 How can the Ardagh Bowling Club be supported to secure their future at the Ardagh?
- 6.2 How can the Bowling Green be protected from further deterioration? Why are BCC not maintaining it?
- 6.3 How can tennis provision and the clubs based at the Ardagh be supported to ensure ongoing availability of these?
- 6.4 Why is Bristol City Council seemingly not maintaining any of the facilities at the Ardagh?

There was significant concern from those attending that the poor state of the facilities at the Ardagh would continue whilst the AGSP consultation takes place and be used as a justification as to why the facilities should be closed and/or demolished. Those attending voiced strong opposition to this, and frustration at the lack of investment that has been made in the facilities over the last 20-30 years.

Attendees questioned why the Ardagh facilities (and site as a whole) is being neglected when other sites in Bristol are being heavily invested in? (Canford Park, St.Georges Park, Netham Park, St.Andrews Park etc).

- 6.4 It was noted that for minimal cost a short fence could be erected around the Bowling Green which would protect it. Since there is no longer a park-keeper

on site, it is being run across and damaged. THIS IS A PRIORITY. Can FOHC and the Ardagh Bowling Club go ahead and install this fence to protect the green from falling into disrepair?

- 6.5 Attendees questioned why there is no longer a park-keeper/someone to collect payments for courts at the Ardagh etc to ensure that the facilities remain accessible and useable by all. THIS IS SEEN AS A PRIORITY for the future of the centre.

It is to note that in the AGSP, St. Andrews Park is allocated a full-time park-keeper – it was questioned why this site is being privileged when it does not have facilities like the Bowling Green (St. Andrews Bowling Club has closed) or tennis courts?

There was significant concern about perceived bias towards other areas of the city (again, please see point 9 for further on this).

This is of significant concern to local residents and attendees were concerned, despite the proposal of transparency and an open process for the AGSP consultation, that decisions have already been taken to the detriment of the Ardagh and wider Horfield Common area. This was prompted, and underlined, by the failure of the AGSP to recognise the popularity, use value to local residents and potential to meet the council's own stated objectives in relation to sports and recreation provision of the Horfield Common, Wellington Hill Playing Field and Ardagh areas.

- 6.7 Tennis players attending stated that they had to bring their own brooms to sweep the courts prior to playing as they are dangerous – attendees stated that the courts need to be improved and then maintained, and that the Ardagh tennis courts are highly valued and very well-used by local residents and wider groups.

Attendees stated that they would like to see access for free tennis continued as this encourages active lives – the tennis club were clear that they would be happy to continue to pay to use the facilities at specific times to ensure their availability for clubs and coaching sessions (which would be impossible to run without being certain of court availability – this is currently a problem).

Again, attendees were concerned that this was being used as a tactic to discourage use so that it can be claimed that there is little demand for the facilities. Attendees were emphatic in refuting this stating clearly that the facilities are in increasing demand year on year.

7. The Bowling Club Chairman stated clearly that the club welcomed partnership with other organisations; he also stated that there had been repeated surveys done of the land to explore why it has experienced subsidence, but that these (expensive) surveys had been inconclusive.

A local historian was able to confirm that land in this area has always been subject to some movement since records began. There was a high level of frustration amongst attendees that development had not begun as a) the subsidence appeared now to have stopped and b) building technologies are significantly further advanced than they were when the site was originally built on, movement of the ground should not be an impediment to this.

The Chair of Ardagh Bowling Club summed up the frustration felt by many attending the meeting when he said that 'you would have thought that nobody had ever built on the side of a hill before.' This sentiment was echoed by others attending. Local residents and users of the facilities do not believe that these issues should be a barrier to development and improvement of the site & stated clearly that with the advance of building technologies – this is not insurmountable & investment should be made in the centre.

8. All agreed that the play facilities on Horfield Common were inadequate and well below the standard of other facilities in Bristol Parks. It was noted that St. Andrews Park has recently had the play equipment and area renewed despite the old equipment being of a much higher standard than that on Horfield Common. **THIS IS A PRIORITY.**

8.1 Can the Section 106 monies noted previously be used to do this? How

quickly can this happen?

9. Additionally, people want accessible public toilets and a cafe or place to purchase refreshments so that they can spend a day on Horfield Common. THESE ARE A PRIORITY.

All attending felt that these additional facilities could be achieved within the Ardagh Site without any loss of sports and recreational facilities (including tennis courts or the bowling green). By repurposing the space and making better use of the outbuildings (for example) provision of these accessible facilities could take place.

The proposals in the AGSP which suggest that in order to have improvements made to the centre, it is necessary to lose facilities was rejected by attendees. It is clear that the site could be improved without any loss of facilities or current functions of the site; although development to encourage a broader range of user groups was fully supported by those attending.

- 9.1 If the development of the outbuildings at the Ardagh could go ahead (which would be possible without needing to have achieved the full masterplan, which, according to the AGSP proposals could well take up to 20 years – if the money is ever available) - can the Section 106 monies noted previously be used to do this? How quickly could this happen so that local residents and users of the Ardagh see some tangible improvements to the site?

10. It was noted that the Ardagh is actually located in the Bishopston ward, but for the purposes of the AGSP is being considered as part of the Horfield and Lockleaze plan. It was noted that Horfield Common (including the Ardagh and Wellington Hill Playing Field) are located at the junction of 3 different Bristol City Council defined Neighbourhood Partnership (NP) areas. The complexity of this artificial division of the

Horfield Common area for administrative purposes was underlined by a number of issues. These were:

10.1 Those interested in and concerned about the proposals for development need to engage with the NP's in 3 different areas which is administratively a burden, and time-wise, a significant commitment. This simply is not possible for many local residents and organisations. How can BCC support local residents and organisations to resolve this?

10.2 The AGSP states that '*it is recognised that they [the boundaries between NP areas] provide an artificial boundary,*' and that '*in drawing up this Ideas and Options Paper, the proximity and use of spaces in neighbouring areas has been taken into account.*' (Ideas and Options Paper, Horfield and Lockleaze AGSP, Page 5).

Noting that the AGSP for Bishopston, Cotham and Redland states '*that the area has one of the lowest amounts of publicly accessible open space in the city,*' and that the AGSP for Westbury-on-Trym, Henleaze and Stoke Bishop stakeholder participation process found that '*There is a limited amount of green space in this Neighbourhood Partnership Area,*' - consideration of the use of Horfield Common (including the Ardagh and Wellington Hill Playing Field) by residents of these 3 NP areas is crucial to ensure that this artificial division of the city for administrative purposes does not work against the aims of the AGSP city-wide, and to the detriment of the local community in the Horfield Common area specifically.

10.3 Whilst the AGSP does state that '*in drawing up this Ideas and Options Paper, the proximity and use of spaces in neighbouring areas has been taken into account,*' there are a large number of inconsistencies between the 3 different NP area AGSPs and other documents (e.g Playing Pitch Strategy) which also form part of the city-wide AGSP proposals.

In view of the Horfield Common area being at the edge of 3 different BCC NP administrative areas, there is significant concern among local

residents that the area is being neglected and overlooked in favour of those areas which do sit centrally within one NP area and which are, therefore, administratively easier to manage. ADDRESSING THIS IS A PRIORITY.

10.4 What processes have the council used to ensure consistency throughout the AGSP process? Has attention meaningfully been paid to this significant issue in developing the AGSP proposals?

11. Additional ACTIONS

11.1 Confirm which is the public land and which is Council owned land on Horfield Common? The AGSP map details 'legend' as a description on maps of sites included on the AGSP for the areas ringed in red – what does this mean?

11.2 Is all of Horfield Common registered, as stated in the AGSP documents, under the 1965 Commons Registration Act? Or are different areas of Horfield Common registered under any different conditions?

11.3 Related to the above - is there a right of way across the land between Kellaway Avenue and the Ardagh?

11.4 Is there a right of way across the land between Kellaway Avenue and the garages at the bottom of the common? If not, could the track potentially be closed to enable development and extension of the play area on the site where it is (leaving access to the privately owned garages site through the bottom end of the common and lane)? This could provide space for adventure play, water play etc and could be achieved independent of the Ardagh masterplan process (see above point X re: timeline for AGSP priorities).

11.5 How would this affect any future plans for the site/proposals for the wider Horfield Common area (including Wellington Hill Playing Field and the Ardagh).

12. It was noted that FOHC had requested 200 copies of the AGSP response documents to hand out to people attending the meeting. The Council advised that they did not have these - they had all been used up at the consultation event on 14 July and so they could not supply them.

Cheryl Ann stated that this was unsatisfactory and that she would pursue this at the Council. She was also aware of other requests for response documents to be sent out in hard copy being refused. This is of significant concern regarding the validity of the AGSP consultation process as a whole.

Copies of the AGSP responses document will be made available to collect from the Ardagh when FOHC can obtain them, but individuals were encouraged to contact BCC direct for copies, or to write in response to the proposals.

In the meantime – FOHC will post information about the proposals at the Ardagh and around the local area (supported by volunteers from those attending the meeting who offered to ‘flyer’ their own street, for example).

FOHC’s guide to responding to the consultation encourages people to write to the council in relation to the AGSP and associated SADMO to make their objections to the sale of Wellington Hill Playing Field clear, and their opposition to the loss of facilities on Horfield Common clear also.

This guide can be downloaded from the FOHC website www.friendsofhorfieldcommon.com or collected by hand from the noticeboards at the Ardagh.

13. Attendees asked what would happen next?

13.1 FOHC will host a further meeting at the Ardagh on Friday 3 September 2010 from 18.30 – 20.00 to update local residents on their progress with the actions noted from this meeting. ALL ARE WELCOME.

13.2 FOHC are intending to submit a Village Green Application for Wellington Hill Playing Field. Copies of the evidence questionnaire for this can be downloaded from the FOHC website & attendees were encouraged to complete one of these.

However, it was noted that this process will not be completed or resolved before the end of the AGSP consultation. It was also noted that submitting an application for this does not guarantee that it will be successful.

13.3 All attendees were encouraged to participate in the AGSP and SADMO consultations and to write to the council to make sure that their views are counted in this.

Summary of ACTIONS

1. **Follow up Section 106 funds available for Horfield Common?**
2. **Arrange meeting between Ardagh Bowls Club and FOHC to discuss the Ardagh Centre – liaise with LTA representative to explore whether potential for all 3 to work together**
3. **Arrange an awareness raising process in the local area to raise awareness of the AGSP (in absence of BCC mail-out) – arrange through volunteers at meeting to leaflet individual roads etc.**
4. **Arrange for banners for the Ardagh and field to make visible AGSP proposals**
5. **Arrange meeting with MFBC, HPC and 62nd Scout Troop to discuss proposals for Asset Transfer and management of WHPF re: white-lining equipment etc**
6. **Submit FOHC response to AGSP**
7. **Submit FOHC response to SADMO**
8. **Encourage all residents and users of the common and field to participate in consultation**
9. **Submit application to register Wellington Hill Playing Field as a Village Green**
10. **Update FOHC website as hub for information; mail notes etc to NP representatives and Cllrs attending**
11. **Arrange follow-up meeting at Ardagh in September to pursue/progress issues**