

<b>MEETING NOTES</b>	
<b>MEETING</b>	<b>ROCK FERRY RESIDENTS MEETING</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>27 JANUARY 2015</b>
<b>MEETING PURPOSE</b>	<b>RESIDENTS INFORMATION EXCHANGE ON THE FUTURE USE OF THE FORMER ROCK FERRY HIGH SCHOOL</b>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>JEANNETTE ROYLE</b>

**Present:** Cllr Moira McLaughlin, Cllr Chris Meaden, Cllr Bill Davies, David Armstrong, David Ball, Jeannette Royle

#### **Introduction and Welcome**

Cllr McLaughlin (Chair) opened the meeting explaining that she was conscious that only residents in Ravenswood Avenue and Highfield Road South had been invited, this was due to logistical reasons of the venue and that these roads were directly affected by the planning application for the demolition of the former school building. A further meeting would be convened so that residents in other nearby roads could be given the opportunity to attend.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the planning application to demolish the former school and importantly to seek the views of residents on the future of the site. A number of common concerns had been raised with Cllr McLaughlin these were: the demolition phase, disturbance, open space, grade 2 listed building, the woodland and what would go on the site.

Cllr McLaughlin introduced both David Armstrong and David Ball.

#### **Rock Ferry High School Background - David Armstrong, Acting Chief Executive**

David explained that he had a 25 year involvement with the school. The school closed three and a half years ago due to falling pupil rolls. David stressed that the Council wanted to remain a good neighbour to the local residents even though the school had closed. The cost keeping the school and ground secure is between £100,000 - £200,000 per year, the Council had allowed the site to be used by Police for dog training as this was thought to deter unwelcome attention to the site, but other uses had been refused when they were considered not suitable to the site or neighbours. The school had been seriously considered for a University Technology College for 14-19 year old students, this was supported very strongly by Cammell Lairds but the scheme failed when other partners pulled out and funding was withdrawn. The site was also considered for an IT University Campus but this did not progress past an initial discussion stage.

The Local Authority has no further use of the site as an education facility, Cabinet declared the site surplus in November 2013. Pupil projections support the decision that the school is not required.

Before any demolition or change of use of land takes place approval must be obtained from the Secretary of State for Education, the application would be submitted after talks and opinions have been sought from local residents. Woodland and trees would remain on the site. There will be 2 applications made to the Secretary of State:

- (i) To declare the school site surplus
- (ii) To seek disposal of the school playing fields (this could mean re-designation of current use)

David confirmed that there will be an extra 2 weeks for residents to send in their comments prior to the Council writing to the Secretary of State.

### **Planning Approval Background – David Ball, Head of Planning**

The land in question is currently designated as “primarily residential land”. The council has a whole range of policies which will apply both national and local, if the land was being considered for redevelopment.

An overview of these policies; any housing development would be of a high quality, have gardens, good access and be well planned. Trees would be retained as much as possible, management of green space would be required as a condition of any development, woodland would be retained as would boundary walls. Biodiversity of the site would be assessed and considered and habitat regulations satisfied. The provision of sports pitches would be re-provided as per Sport England requirements. The Planning process allows for statutory consultation of 21 days and resident representations are fully considered in the process.

### **Question & Answer Session**

**Q1** A number of houses in the area are still empty, will this happen with the Rock Ferry site?

**Q2** Will social housing be built? There are still Lovell houses empty.

**Ans:** The government requires Councils to meet house building targets, Wirral has a shortage of houses. The intention is for this site to be a private sector development of family houses, the development would be structured to minimise empty houses. The Lovell scheme was a housing market renewal scheme for social housing, this would be a different development.

**Q3** Why were there bulldozers on the site today?

**Ans:** The Council is undergoing a large office rationalisation programme, one of the projects had overrun which required temporary storage of furniture and equipment otherwise it would cost a significant amount of money to delay delivery. The decision was taken to use the sports hall at Rock Ferry but due to the size of the entrance there was a need for the entrance gates to be knocked down and rebuilt to allow vehicles on to the site. This activity is not connected to the discussions tonight.

**Q4** Last February 180 houses were identified for the site.

**Ans:** The Housing Strategy must categorise sites, category 1 sites are easy to develop. The land use plan has been in place since 2000. Any development still needs planning permission. Residential land zone – policy HS4 applies.

**Q5** *This was Alison Meahan but no record made of her question*

**Q6** There are TPO's and wildlife

**Ans:** There will be protection for the site which will include the woodland

**Q7** Planning – there will be pupil increases

**Ans:** The current school capacity in Wirral is for 26263 pupils, there are only 20,900 pupils so there are 5,000 places surplus in Secondary schools. The local authority calculates these forecasts in discussion with health and projected birth rates. In 2024 there will be 3,380 surplus secondary places.

**Q8** Highfield South resident – has been resident for 38 years, Rock Ferry has been ignored, traffic problems, proper housing is needed, playing fields could be used by Plessington High School

**Q9** Why does Rock Ferry High need to be developed when there are unfinished houses in 7 Oaks; where are the new families coming from; how can schools cope with the extra pupils

**Ans:** these questions have been answered previously

**Q10** Care about the woodlands, want to preserve the field and plateau

**Q11** No objection to the demolition of buildings but could object to proposals.

**Ans:** Cllr McLaughlin stressed that this was not a Council consultation.

**Q12** When looking at an aerial view , Rock Ferry has very little green space.

**Q13** What is this meeting about? The school is a lovely building and it shouldn't be about money.

**Ans:** Cllr Mc states that it is not a council meeting and the purpose of the meeting is to gauge residents views.

**Q14** Concerned that access is going to be via Ravenswood; large trailer appeared yesterday

**Q15** Is Ravenswood going to be de-listed?

**Ans:** No, the Council only challenged the listing at the time of the listing by English Heritage

**Q16** If you are preserving the woodland, how much will be preserved? Could a 6<sup>th</sup> form college use the school building?

Ans: DA - the Council cannot get funding for 6<sup>th</sup> form provision, the Council tried very hard to establish a University Technical College. DB – we will try and keep as much of the woodland as possible.

Q17 The Lovell estate – fences kicked in, problem area, phase 2 has not happened

Ans: Cllr McL said this meeting was to focus on the Rock Ferry High site only

Q18 What is the process/procedure (i) minutes (ii) next stage

Ans: Cllr McL notes of the meeting can be checked at 13/2 meeting;

Q19 Thorpebank residents were not invited

Ans: There will be another meeting, invitations will be sent out to other residents

Q20 Has old school been offered to Wirral Met?

Ans: DA - no interest has been received by other education providers; other colleges were involved at the time of the UTC discussions

Q21 Yewtree Court has a nice aspect, this is why we bought a house there

Q22 Is there a guarantee to keep the boundary wall and trees?

Ans: Cllr Meaden – ward representatives here to listen to residents and to input into Planning process

Q23 Behind the woodland area, damage to boundary wall, will this be repaired?

Q24 If there is a guarantee to keep boundary wall “Ravenswood” should not be used as the entrance

Q25 Given the level of interest and the length of time residents living in the area – would support demolition of building but leave green space.

This question was supported by a show of hands.

Q26 I do not want the school or fields touched, visually impaired people use the space, there should be a community hall facility

Q27 Community use, do not want housing, do not want traffic issues, want green spaces

Q28 Rock Ferry doesn't have a public park, children play on the field currently

Q29 Public fields should be accessible

Listed of residents wishes:

1. protected woodland
2. well spaced semi's/detached houses
3. demolish the old school
4. protected fields

5. leave the site as it is
6. preserve the plateau for public open space
7. play area for children
8. no flats
9. youth centre for teenagers
10. consider infrastructure – schools, transport, entrances
11. community hall

The meeting closed at 19:45.

<b>MEETING NOTES</b>	
<b>MEETING</b>	<b>ROCK FERRY RESIDENTS MEETING (2)</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>13 FEBRUARY 2015</b>
<b>MEETING PURPOSE</b>	<b>RESIDENTS INFORMATION EXCHANGE ON THE FUTURE USE OF THE FORMER ROCK FERRY HIGH SCHOOL</b>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>JEANNETTE ROYLE</b>

**Present:** Frank Field MP, Cllr Moira McLaughlin, Cllr Chris Meaden, Cllr Bill Davies, David Armstrong, David Ball, Jeannette Royle

#### **Introduction and Welcome**

Cllr Moira McLaughlin welcomed residents to the second meeting to discuss the former Rock Ferry High School site. There was a small delay in the arrival of both Frank Field MP and David Armstrong, Acting Chief Executive due to an incident in the Borough.

Jeannette Royle gave a brief overview of the consultation process prior to the submission to the Secretary of State for the change of use and disposal of the school and playing fields. Jeannette stressed that this was the very start of the process to seek residents views on the future use of the site and that she welcomed suggestions and comments.

#### **Main Meeting**

Frank Field MP welcomed residents and gave a synopsis of his opinion as to the future use of the site, he suggested that these options were added to during the meeting as discussions progressed.

Options:

1. Retain woodland areas within the site
2. Retain pitches
3. Entry to the site should be Highfield Road South and not via Ravenswood Avenue

4. Development of residential housing to the remaining of the site, to include bungalows and a retirement village
5. Stone boundary walls to be protected

Concerns of the site:

1. Anti-social behaviour where there are large areas of open space
2. Occupation of the site by travellers

Frank Field MP, lead a general question and answer session with residents, the following points represent the main discussions of the evening:

Questions/Comments from residents:

1. New housing developments should focus on brown field sites – agreed that a survey would be carried out
2. Ravenswood building saved – this is a grade 2 listed building and will have to be retained
3. Rising population will require additional schools – DA gave figures which indicate that there are adequate secondary school places going forward with surpluses
4. Merits of the main school building and should be retained – building was assessed by English Heritage but not listed
5. Why spend £6m on building The Hive when Rock Ferry could be used – appraisal to be undertaken
6. Other groups such as the scouts would be interested in using the former school building - noted
7. Retort over comments on the listing of Ravenswood - noted
8. General agreement that some development on the site would be welcomed
9. Concern over the drainage of the plateau area if developed - noted

Agreed:

1. A survey would be undertaken in the Ward to quantify amount of available brownfield sites in the ward for housing development (DB)
2. An agreement from a majority of the audience that the footprint of the school building (excluding Ravenswood) could be built upon; bungalows for retired residents to be considered
3. Appraisal to be undertaken of locating The Hive on the Rock Ferry site (JER)
4. The acting Chief Executive agreed that the consultation period would be extended until after the next meeting on the 13 March (JER)
5. Residents group to be established to collate ideas and suggestions (MM)
6. Petition to be conducted asking for a moratorium on flat building in Rock Ferry

<b>MEETING NOTES</b>	
<b>MEETING</b>	<b>ROCK FERRY RESIDENTS MEETING (3)</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>13 MARCH 2015</b>
<b>MEETING PURPOSE</b>	<b>RESIDENTS INFORMATION EXCHANGE ON THE FUTURE USE OF THE FORMER ROCK FERRY HIGH SCHOOL</b>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>JEANNETTE ROYLE</b>

**Present:** Frank Field MP, Cllr Moira McLaughlin, Cllr Chris Meaden, Cllr Bill Davies, David Armstrong, Jeannette Royle

### **Introduction and Welcome**

Frank Field MP welcomed residents to the third meeting to discuss the former Rock Ferry High School site. Following the previous meeting of the 13 February there were a number of items to report back on which had been requested from residents.

#### 1. Brownfield Sites

An exercise had been completed to identify brownfield sites in the area. There were indications that a total of 80 flats were proposed. Frank Field said that he would make representations to the Planning Committee and put a case forward to look at the social composition of the area; with the view to the Council limiting the number of flats being built. This matter would be progressed through the Executive Group.

#### 2. Youth Zone

Following a suggestion from the previous meeting that the new Youth Zone could be located on the RFHS site, David Armstrong reported that a report had been received from "On-side" who is working on the Wirral Youth Zone Project. There were a number of crucial considerations for the siting of a Youth Zone and these have been confirmed by the successful Youth Zones in 5 other Boroughs including Bolton.

- (i) Neutrality
- (ii) Prominence
- (iii) Accessibility

The RFHS site would not meet all these criteria and it was confirmed that the large amounts of private investment (both Capital and Revenue) would not be forthcoming if the RFHS site was chosen as the location for the Youth Zone.

Frank Field commented that a number of residents had raised their concern after the last meeting. The proximity of residential houses to the RFHS site could be an issue which is one of the reasons why the central Birkenhead site is more favourable.

#### 3. Executive Group

Cllr Moira McLaughlin reported on the progress of the setting up of a residents executive group following advice she had received from the Borough Solicitor. A written constitution of the group was required which explained the purpose of the group, membership of the group and the area to be covered (344 properties). The interim executive group which was convened after the last meeting agreed on the property extent on which to draw membership.

Vicore had been asked to facilitate the residents group and would be able to draw funding.

4. Main School Building – Urban Splash

Urban Splash visited the school with Cllr McLaughlin and Jeannette Royle. Whilst they did think that development could be done with themselves and their partners it wasn't their usual project. They were interested in the Grade 2 listed Ravenswood.

Questions on the Night:

- (i) Open spaces are the cornerstones of our community, is the Council considering this, there are examples of forest schools which should be looked at. DA responded –
- (ii) Request that emails between Frank Field and Moira McLaughlin be published – FF agreed that these be published
- (iii) Member of the public asked if the £8m price for the land is still required by the Council – DA explained that £8m was an indicative value if all the land was available for development, this would reduce if not all the site was made available for housing development. Further explanation was given that Capital receipts may not always be forthcoming and investment would have to be reconsidered. DA explained the on-going annual costs of securing RFHS.
- (iv) A question was asked as to whether the Capital receipt would be spent in the Rock Ferry area. DA explained that a whole range of schools and recreation projects already being delivered and planned using Capital receipts from surplus assets generally.
- (v) Question as to whether residents could write directly to the Secretary of State when the Council submits its application for disposal? DA confirmed yes this can be done.

Notes:

During the meeting Police had to step in to calm a number of people protesting about the site and had been close removing them from the meeting.

After approx. 45 minutes the meeting was stopped due to Frank Field taken ill.



<b>MEETING NOTES</b>	
<b>MEETING</b>	<b>ROCK FERRY RESIDENTS MEETING (4)</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>29 MAY 2015</b>
<b>MEETING PURPOSE</b>	<b>RESIDENTS INFORMATION EXCHANGE ON THE FUTURE USE OF THE FORMER ROCK FERRY HIGH SCHOOL</b>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>JEANNETTE ROYLE</b>

**Present:** Frank Field MP, Cllr Moira McLaughlin, Cllr Chris Meaden, Cllr Bill Davies, David Armstrong, Jeannette Royle

### **Introduction and Welcome**

Frank Field MP welcomed residents to the fourth meeting to discuss the former Rock Ferry High School site.

Pleased that good progress was being made in setting up the residents association. Communication was fundamental to the success and it is a forum for residents to air their views.

#### **Executive Group (Residents Group)**

Cllr Moira McLaughlin reported on the progress of the setting up of a residents executive group following advice she had received from the Borough Solicitor. Wirral Community Action had met to establish the Group. In some roads residents have come forward for representation and meetings were being set up.

Question (Mr Bell) Highfield Road was a long road and only 1 representative has been identified. MMC responded saying that the board would consider numbers. Mr Bell asked if the residents group was a smoke screen. MMC – categorically denied this.

Frank Field – Still has a desire to involve Urban Splash in any development plans particularly for the school building. Emphasised that Community based groups are growing in importance for local matters.

Darryl Karris (Mersey Royal football) – Explained to the meeting that he had set up a Trust to consider the use of the sports pitches at the former RFHS site; a development plan was being written.

Thorpe Bank resident; can a covenant be placed on the land?

Frank Field – this is an item of importance which residents should consider at their meeting.

- Asked the meeting to approve Residents Planning Group – the meeting approved this; MP and Councillors would support this.

David Armstrong – gave an update on the application to the Secretary of State: Little progress has been made which should be seen as a positive as at the last meeting officers gave residents the assurance that no application would be made until the conclusion of the scheduled meetings with residents. Darryl was producing a business case and had met with council officers. The use of a covenant could be restrictive to the residents proposals and a lease could be better suited? No response had been received from Urban Splash. The Isle of Man University are working with the Council to establish training facilities in Birkenhead and had enquired about available laboratory space, Rock Ferry had been suggested but the location was not appropriate. Security was still being maintained by the Council. It is the intention of officers to present a report to Cabinet describing the outcomes of the consultation process. The secretary of state application would be done following this.

Question: was this going to be the same as Ingleborough Road? DA explained that this was different circumstances. Council officers had been viewing the site as 3 distinct areas for ease of understanding the requirements. There is a need for the Council to apply to the Secretary of State to release the site as a school site, this would be required for any proposed use.

Frank Field – confirmed that the meeting is asking that the Council gives permission for the change of use; lease proposal be explored and options for the use of the site. Site is not needed as a school.

Question: Are one way roads being considered. Chris Meaden confirmed that this would be looked at.

Old Boys Representative: asked that the school be treated with respect; Ravenswood could be a focal point for former pupils.

DK – emphasised that the football club wants to work with the residents.

Rob Parry – asked if lease options could be brought to the residents.