

# **Note of meeting between Radley College (the College) and Radley Parish Council (RPC) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee, 17 October, 2016**

## **Present**

Cllr Jenny Standen	RPC, chair	Andrew Ashton	College, Bursar
Cllr Priscilla Dudding	RPC, NP Steering Committee chair	David Anderson	College, Estates Bursar
Cllr Lynda Crowley			
Richard Dudding	Other NP Steering Committee members		
Sheila Smith			
Martin Wilson			
Christine Wootton			
Graham Collett	Chair, Village Hall Committee		

## **Purpose of meeting and general context**

The purpose of the meeting had been set out in a letter from the Parish Clerk to Andrew Ashton on 29 September. RPC were in an advanced stage of drafting a text of the Neighbourhood Plan which could be put to formal consultation, and wanted to clarify the College's position on three issues: an additional new graveyard site, an alternative site for the village allotments and the development of the Gooseacre site for village hall and recreational purposes. The questions put to the College in the 29 September letter are given in the relevant sections of these minutes below.

Andrew Ashton explained that the College's governing body was 'Council' and all decisions on lease extensions and property investment and disposals were for them to take. He and David Anderson prepared proposals to put to them, and in doing so took account of the wider village and community of which the College were part. They took a long term view, extending even beyond the Local Plan time horizon of 2031. Council was next due to meet in about a month.

He also referred to the 'moving parts' which made it difficult to plan with certainty at this stage, especially ahead of the conclusion of Part 2 of the Local Plan.

Priscilla Dudding said that the Neighbourhood Plan was also about the longer term. While uncertainties remained, it was important to the RPC to make early progress on the Plan so as to shape the major development on the strategic sites which was now relatively certain. The College were a key player and there were some specific issues on which it was important to have an early understanding of their position ahead of formal consultation.

## **Additional graveyard space**

*‘Whether the College is prepared to supply land close to the Church and school for a new graveyard site, the precise location to be established as part of plans for the extension of the primary school?’*

The College said they had long recognised the need for additional graveyard space, and saw no difficulty in principle in providing a site to the east of the Church. The precise location would depend on decisions about the enlargement of primary school which Oxfordshire County Council had put on hold pending Part 2 of the Local Plan. RPC said they were grateful for this and understood that the precise location could not be settled now.

## **Replacement allotments**

*‘Whether the College would be prepared to supply a strip of land with road access to the north of Spinney’s Close for use as allotments in return for a reasonable consideration?’*

The College said they had two reservations. First they did not believe the site by the railway line to the north of Spinney’s Close was suitable. It was liable to flood and access would be very difficult and potentially expensive. If College land was to be used a site nearer the carpark might be better. Second they were only one of the landowners within the potential area of search and did not believe they should provide land without a wider process including sites in other ownership.

On the latter point it was noted that there had been an earlier proposal to use a site owned by Jo McDougall to the south of the road leading down to Lower Radley. Some of the circumstances had changed and there might be a case for looking at this again.

There was also some discussion about the potential practical difficulties of developing the current allotment site and whether the need could be avoided if the village shop was located instead on the Bowyer Arms site. RPC explained the importance of finding additional space for the shop close to its current location. It was a key part of the strategy to extend and strengthen facilities which worked as a hub for local people. They recognised that the allotment site was challenging, and were on the point of commissioning studies to see how far the challenges could be overcome. There was no obvious alternative. The Bowyer Arms site would also be a very good one, but Greene King had twice refused to discuss it. They would welcome any assistance that the College might be able to give on that.

In conclusion, the College agreed to play their part in helping identify an alternative allotment site provided the exercise extended to other landowners. They would also consider whether their contacts with Greene King might be helpful in discussing use of the Bowyer site for the shop.

## **Village Hall and playing fields.**

*'Whether the College will be prepared to consider an extension to the current leases for the village hall and playing fields if plans are agreed for upgrading the area; and Whether the College wish to be represented on the working group which the PC and village hall committee are setting up to consider such plans?'*

The College explained where they were coming from in the proposals they had made over recent years for the Gooseacre site. They believed that the area to the north of the Church Road would provide a better site for the village hall and playing fields, with more space to ensure they were fit for purpose and to allow for better colocation with other community facilities. This was their objective view based on the best fit between land and function. While their proposal would free the development of Gooseacre for housing they believed the development gain from that would be barely sufficient to cover the relocation costs, so the proposition was not financially driven.

There was some discussion about the response from the May consultation. 37% of those responding had said they favoured the village hall and playing field being relocated north of Church Road, 32% favoured staying at Gooseacre and 31% had no strong view. The College believed that, taken with the majority support of those expressing a view in its own consultation of March 2015, this was sufficient support for the change. RPC said they did not agree. They had not entered the May consultation with any fixed view for or against the College's proposal, but believed that a clearer margin in favour of the Church Road site was needed to justify moving the facilities to Church Road and developing the Gooseacre land. The fact that the Church road site and Gooseacre were in Green Belt was a particular barrier in the face of strong opposition from a substantial section of the Radley population. The consultation had however shown strong support for a village hall and playing field which people could be proud of, and RPC wanted to move the debate on from one about site to one about realisation of that ambition. If the College's position was not financially driven might they not be able to join in the realisation of that ambition even if they remained unconvinced by the choice of site?

RPC said that the working group being established by RPC and the Village Hall committee would be looking at how the site could be best used in future, bearing in mind the various potential demands on it. Some of those demands came from outside the village so the expansion of Radley village would not necessarily result in an equivalent expansion of demand. It was also a significant new factor that the Local Plan provided for two full size football pitches in Radley parish on the North Abingdon site. The main issues for the future were more about the hall itself and informal recreation rather than the playing field.

There was some discussion about the current lease, which was due to expire in 2037. RPC would need some security about future occupation of the site if they were to invest in a new building and apply for grants. Conversely the College would not be able to develop the site for housing against the wishes of RPC until after the lease expired, and even then planning permission could be problematic.

The College said that they would not normally decide formally on a lease renewal so long before the current one expired. They understood the reason for RPC deciding to support retaining the Village Hall at the Gooseacre site and, whilst they did not entirely agree with the conclusions following their respective consultations, they were neutral on the choice of Village Hall site rather than in opposition to RPC's view. Accordingly, they would in principle be ready to work in partnership with RPC and the Village Hall Committee to explore the opportunities for developing a quality solution on the current site but would need to reserve their position in respect of lease renewal or extension prior to the conclusion of the current Local Plan 2031 process, including Part 2, at the earliest.

#### **North West Radley site**

The College said they would be carrying out a village consultation about the site in January 2017 with a view to an application for outline planning permission in the Spring. The Vale had not yet spoken to them about convening a Development Forum, and they would enquire about that.

RSD

21/10/16