

## **New Sporting Facilities**

As we are currently in the midst of the Olympics, and the City Centre is decorated in recognition of an Olympic champion, it seems appropriate this month to look at the City Plan and our proposals for improving sporting facilities.

Perhaps, firstly though a reminder that the proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan only apply within the boundaries of the Parish of Ripon and therefore, with these being very tight to the current development limits of the City, the scope of what can be achieved is somewhat limited.

However, there are nonetheless some key issues with sporting facilities which the City Plan is seeking to help to tackle. The first is swimming facilities. The latest information from Harrogate Borough Council (as reported in the press – 15th October 2015) suggests that they are currently exploring the costs of "... swimming provision as part of a wet and dry leisure facility on the Ripon Leisure Centre site on Dallamires Lane."

On that basis, and having considered the options, the draft Ripon City Plan is proposing a policy to support the development of the Leisure Centre facilities at Camp Close. If this were to go ahead, we recognise that equally important for Ripon residents is the redevelopment of the current Ripon Swimming Baths site. Accordingly the draft Ripon City Plan is proposing that this is an important part of the Spa Quarter and that the front range of the current premises should be retained but otherwise the site should be made available to facilitate improvements to Ripon hospital.

Our work on the supporting documentation for the draft Ripon City Plan, has seen us assessing and analysing many documents. Accordingly we have looked at the Harrogate Borough Council Outdoor Sports Strategy (2013) produced by Neil Allen Associates and also the Sports, Recreation, Open Space and Village Halls Study (Parts 1 & 2) which was published in September 2011 as part of the evidence for the now withdrawn Harrogate District Sites and Policies DPD. From these documents we have been able to identify a number of key issues for Ripon and this underpins our approach to sport in the Ripon City Plan.

One of the key figures that stands out is that Ripon (in September 2011) had a deficiency of outdoor sporting facilities. This is one of the reasons that the draft City Plan feels it is appropriate to protect facilities currently within the security fence at Clotherholme, expand public use of these pitches and potentially further improve the facilities to meet future needs such as 3G pitches. Ripon currently has no such facilities.

So, our proposed draft policy for the regeneration of the Clotherholme barracks suggests the retention of the sports fields in their entirety for the creation of a sporting village. Having being advised by North Yorkshire Sport (the County Sport Partnership), whilst preparing the draft Ripon City Plan to look at Sowerby Sports Village project in nearby Thirsk, we have identified that there are lots of parallels and we are keen to ensure that the potential of a multi-sport facility is positively explored in the redevelopment of the barracks site.

Given all of this, some of you may be querying why, in the preliminary draft Ripon City Plan we proposed the relocation of the football and rugby clubs. The two aforementioned documents suggest that both clubs are constrained by their current facilities and both have aspirations to

improve the quality and amount of facilities they provide. However, there are no easy solutions and in the draft Ripon City Plan we recognise that in the long-term either club may need to sell their existing land in order to fund any planned relocation. Looking strategically to the future of the City, we want to ensure that the potential for creating a new link road between Mallorie Park Drive and Studley Road is not lost as part of any redevelopment of these sites and this is why we have a draft policy to that effect.

We have said before that the draft Ripon City Plan is a mix of policies and complementary projects. Alongside the policy to allocate the land the draft Ripon City Plan identifies the project work required to further develop the Clothholme sporting village concept to identify the facilities needed and attract the investment to fund the development.

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