

RESPONSES TO COMMENTS

WALTHAMSTOW WEST MEETING 28 JUNE 2006.

1)Town Centre Regeneration

K Lord was concerned about the arcade development and the general lack of progress with the Town Centre redevelopment.

P Herlihy asked for a breakdown on expenditure to date for the site and other issues raised.

Response: Anne Bonsor, Head of Regeneration Programmes

The costs to date on the Arcade site are around the demolition costs, the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) costs, specialist advisers, and ongoing security. To date these amount to £5.4m. The bulk of these costs have been around the costs of CPO and demolition and the breakdown is as follows:

Security: £170,000
Portfolio Management Services £210,000
External advisors, legal and other £603,000
Demolition costs £440,718
Compensation payments £3,958,569

We appreciate that local people are very keen to know what will be happening on the Arcade site as it is a key site in the town centre and the council has been unable to release information on progress due to commercial confidentiality that revolve around the negotiation process.

However, the council and preferred developer have in the last week agreed to terminate their partnership, as the developer was unable to give the necessary guarantees to the council that would safeguard the council's priorities for the revitalisation of the Town Centre. A joint statement was released to the local press to that end:

“Bringing a cinema and a high quality development to Walthamstow Town Centre remains a very high priority for the Council. We have been unable to reach a mutually agreeable position with our preferred partner Henry Boot Developments to deliver our aspirations for the Arcade site. As a result we have jointly agreed to end our partnership agreement”

The council is now reviewing the options for the redevelopment of the site and will, as a result of this, draw up a strategy that will identify the best way forward. This will be reported to the community council in due course.

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2) Market

a) A resident was concerned about the cleansing of the area where the street market was located, stating that it was usually in a very poor state of cleanliness. When the community was consulted on the closure of the market on Mondays it was promised that this day would be to “deep clean” the area, however, to date this had not been in evidence. He wanted to know further details about such plans to clean the area and whether the Monday plans were to go ahead as promised.

Response: Peter Findlay, Town Centre Manager

The resident is distorting the situation a bit. In a consultation letter sent to residents one of the rationales for closing the market was that it would offer the opportunity of access to clean or to carry out maintenance works other than Sundays, which is very expensive i.e. we could expect twice the work for the same amount of money. Nobody was promised anything - nor did they vote for anything. As I am obliged to clean the High St on Sundays we carry out most of our deep cleansing then. It is still much quieter than on Mondays and the high-pressure washers do represent a health and safety risk and are a bit of a nuisance in busy areas. We get a much better run at it on Sundays. On Mondays there has been an ongoing maintenance programme for weeks now and it is also the day gully cleansing is carried out. We still sweep the High St on Mondays to a very high standard. I personally inspect the Town Centre on Mondays and am satisfied that our standards remain very high. We currently spend in excess of £260K cleansing the Town Centre. There is currently a £50K 'hole' in the budget. There simply aren't any more resources to throw at it at this time.

Admittedly the market is looking a bit derelict at the moment. The ideal to reduce the number of stalls was to have taken place in conjunction with a rolling programme of highway improvement works. Only a small proportion of these were carried out before the funding dried up. Although much more difficult to do now we still have every intention to complete the reformatting of the market. In order to do so we have had to wait while the vacancy rate went up to create the gaps needed. Sadly this has resulted in a bit of a derelict feel at the moment. The good news is that we are now in a position to start our own programme of reform and coupled with some very long awaited enforcement powers there should be considerable visual improvement in the not too distant future.

Recycling

b) A resident felt that much of the market waste could be composted and/or recycled and this seemed like a common sense thing to do.

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Response: Peter Findlay, Town Centre Manager

The logistics of recycling cardboard from the market are complex to say the least. We spent months gearing ourselves up for it. At the last moment ECT refused to handle it at the CA site because it wasn't compacted. This meant we would have to dedicate one of our vehicles as a clean cardboard recycling vehicle only, which wasn't feasible in terms of breakdowns, cover and the need for a dedicated crew. Alternatively we would have had to turn our compound at South Grove into a transfer station by installing a static compactor. This option is massively expensive and probably illegal in any event. The only way it will be economically viable is if we can do it with current resources and plant. We desperately want to do it and we are still looking to find a practical, cost effective method. At the moment we only recover pallets, some organic produce, and metals for recycling.

3) Gasworks

A resident complained about the proliferation of gasworks in the area, often working from 7am to 7pm, which was not allowed. Complaints have been ignored and no one seems to be taking responsibility for handling the issue. The resident was anxious to find out how this could be taken forward.

Response: Tony Martin Chief Engineer, Environmental Services.

If the gas works relate to gas leakage and therefore a danger to person and property, these works must proceed without restriction. If the works are routine planned works any request for out of normal hours working would only be considered if there were significant benefits to be gained by the road users and residents of the borough. Also procedures are in place to minimise any inconvenience that may result.

No authorisation for Sunday or out of hours working was agreed with this borough on the routine gas works currently being undertaken. We have contacted National Grid Gas who confirm that their works supervisor organised the out of hours working unilaterally and that this practice has now been stopped. National Grid Gas advise that if problems arise they can be contacted on their 24 hours manned telephone line 0800 0965678. Alternatively calls can be made to Waltham Forest Direct 020 8496 3000 where the logged details will be passed to Highway Network for action.

4) Traffic Violations

The second issue related to responsibility for traffic violations being passed over to the Local Authority. This apparently was news to the Police and the resident presumed that it was the red-light cameras. Could someone please confirm details on this issue?

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Response: Tony Martin Chief Engineer, Environmental Services

The Police are fully aware of taking over the enforcement of moving traffic contraventions as we had to give notice to the MET prior to taking on this responsibility.

5) Budget Overspend Building Services

K Lord noted that the local playground in Greenleaf Road was to be repaired and redecorated (loose steps, slide work, etc) which he had to raise with the Council to get done. A letter he received stated that it would be done within the limited budgetary resources available. Looking again at the budget monitoring documents published by the Council, he was surprised to see that on the one hand, staff on the ground were being starved of resources, while Building Services overspent by £2.2 million in the last financial year and have been allocated an extra overspend on forecasts for this year of some £700,000. This allocation of additional funds he considered would need to come from somewhere and therefore would impact significantly right throughout the Environmental Services budget planning function, most notably at street level where it really counted. He requested clarification on exactly what Building Services was, what they did and why such enormous overspends on forecast.

Response: Martin Esom, Executive Director of Environmental Services

The predicted overspend for Building Consultancy was in the region of £500k and not the £2.2 stated. The repair of the local playground was not affected by this overspend. Building Consultancy Services is a department that provides professional and technical property services to the Council. The overspend was a result of external service users changing their procurement of such services. The Council is currently working on ways in which to reduce or eliminate any future liabilities.

3) Blackhorse Lane Project

Responses by Matthew Nimmo, regenfirst ltd, 28/07/2006

a) Youth provision

A resident member of the Higham Hill Community Association noted that there appeared to be little or nothing of youth provision within the plans. Another resident suggested that more should be done to consult with youth on their needs and wants. They were not being catered for under these schemes and they deserved to get something for their futures.

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Response:

We agree that providing facilities and services of interest to young people is important. Consultation with local teenagers was undertaken through three discussion groups organised through local schools and voluntary organisations which revealed that young people do believe there is a lack of facilities and activities for them locally and that crime, anti-social behaviour and poor bus services affect their ability to access the facilities that do exist.

Section 10.4 of the full draft Interim Planning Policy Framework states that the Council will "prioritise meeting the needs of young people through developments within local schools and by supporting the refocusing or expansion of existing provision." The proposals for two new secondary schools in the area will make significant improvements to provision for young people, both within school time and after school. Both new schools will also offer the wider community access to much-enhanced sports, leisure, learning and other community facilities. There is also potential to develop after school provision at William Morris school and to provide outreach youth work from the proposed new Joint Service Centre on the corner of Blackhorse Lane and Billet Road.

The draft framework also identifies the potential to include informal recreation facilities for young people on Cheney Row Open Space to the north of Billet Road and to improve access to existing and improving facilities such as the canoeing club at Stonebridge Lock in Tottenham Marshes.

b) Environmental impact of proposals

A resident highlighted a recent consultation report on the new developments (Page 22) which spoke of 'sustainable development' and 'amenity value', however, she noted that sustainability was not necessarily a function of price. In these days of global climate warming, it should be compulsory to look at high quality sustainable developments, with a view to the Borough becoming a leader and example to other areas in turning these opportunities into landmark developments of which we can be proud.

Response:

Thank you for your concern about the environmental impact of the proposed developments. The Council is committed to principles of sustainable development. Section 8.5 of the draft Blackhorse Lane Interim Planning Policy Framework lays down requirements for the design of new developments to be energy efficient and to manage flood risk, for example through sustainable drainage techniques. Section 7.3 proposes a new waterfront park and Section 7.5 proposes greening the area through integration of features such as green roofs and planting, all of which will introduce new habitat into the area. These

requirements are set out in the draft plans as strongly as is possible within a planning policy document of this kind.

c) Standard Music Venue

A resident noted that one landmark venue that was well-known even outside the Borough and provided at least one avenue for evening entertainment (The Standard Venue) was highlighted to be demolished and replaced with a similar venue. However, she was sceptical of such promises based on those made in the past about other things such as the library, cinema and arcade. She felt it would be a terrible loss if it were to go.

Response:

The draft Interim Planning Framework strongly encourages developers of the site opposite Blackhorse Road Station to re-provide the Standard Music Venue as part of the new developments. Section 6.2 of the full document states that "The existing Standard Music Venue is the only live music venue in the area and popular with some local residents as well as attracting visitors to the area. The Council would therefore like to see a music venue re-provided within the new Neighbourhood Centre" and Section 12.1j) states that 'The Council sees it as highly desirable to re-provide a music venue as part of the new developments and will work with developers to try to achieve this.' The draft planning and design brief for this site identifies a potential new location for the venue on the ground floor of the proposed new car park.

What is unfortunately not possible is for the Council to guarantee that the Standard will be reprovided as it is privately owned and the decision to operate a music venue at Blackhorse Lane must in the end be a commercial one.

d) Traveller site and Muslim burial ground

A resident asked whether these plans for the school site (McEntee School) took account of the burial site and gypsy site located there.

Response:

The proposal to replace McEntee School with a city academy on the same site with use of some of the playing fields will not affect the Muslim burial ground or the travellers site on Folly Lane. The key diagram in the draft plans may suggest that the 'recreation ground and playing fields' are more extensive than they actually are - the diagram will be amended in the final version of the plans to more clearly exclude the burial ground and travellers site.

e) Traffic congestion & water supply

A resident was concerned that the plans for the relief road only took account of traffic in one direction and no account of issues with traffic coming from any of the other directions. She felt that this measure would not help the situation significantly with the increased traffic volumes expected. She noted also that this congestion problem at the junction seemed to be a particular issue when it rained. On another water-related issue, she wondered whether the increased numbers of houses planned for the area would not impact negatively upon the already scarce water resource situation that we see at present.

Response:

Quite a number of people expressed concern about the impact of additional housing on traffic congestion. The draft planning framework proposes up to 2,000 new homes in the area over the next 10 years. A Transport Access and Infrastructure Study (available on the Blackhorse Lane web site) has been undertaken which includes a detailed analysis of the likely impact of this level of development on the travel demands and characteristics of the local area, based on the known impact of similar developments elsewhere in London.

Based on the findings of the study, the draft planning framework concentrates proposals for changes to the existing transport infrastructure on the Standard Junction (at the station) in order to accommodate the forecast additional traffic and improve the junction for pedestrians. The proposed new road linking Forest Road west of Blackhorse Road Station with Blackhorse Lane will remove some traffic from the Standard Junction and allow improvements to the crossings at the junction. The study included detailed computer modelling of the impact of the developments and the proposed road on the functioning of the junction and concluded that traffic could be accommodated without creating unacceptable tail backs.

We are aware that there is sometimes westbound congestion along Ferry Lane which appears to be caused by problems with the Tottenham Hale Gyratory system. The traffic system at Tottenham Hale is being reviewed by Haringey Council and Transport for London and may well be changed in the future which will hopefully address this issue. We will be liaising with Haringey Council and Transport for London in relation to these issues and will pass on your comment about congestion occurring in wet conditions.

The Council recognises in its Unitary Development Plan that the supply of water to new developments is becoming increasingly onerous and sewerage systems and sewage treatment works are in places reaching capacity. The

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Council will therefore consult with the relevant statutory undertakers regarding water and sewerage infrastructure where a proposed development is likely to have significant implications for these services.

f) Willowfield School relocation

A resident wished to concentrate on the proposal for Willowfield School, as she lived nearby to the new site with her house overlooking Douglas Eyre playing fields. She wished to know in which direction the school would be facing, what percentage of the fields would be absorbed and where exactly the school would be located. For instance, was it to be on the old Warner Head Office site? She was concerned that 'thousands' of schoolchildren would be wandering up and down what is currently a quiet residential road. She noted in the plans the incentive that cultural opportunities would be improved for local residents. She questioned the sincerity of this comment, as Willowfield had already offered adult education in the past, but this had been cut out, so the record to date was not good on this issue.

Response:

Willowfield School is a successful secondary school that is in urgent need of modern premises. The existing site is not large enough to meet the educational needs of a modern secondary school of the size of Willowfield and funding has been secured from central government to rebuild the school on a new larger site. The Council has been working with the staff and Governing Body of the school for several years now to try to find a suitable site in the area. Several other sites have been considered and rejected for a variety of reasons including surrounding uses and cost.

Earlier this year we started considering relocating the school to a site at the north end of the Douglas Eyre playing field, comprising some of that field and an adjacent area of land owned by Circle Anglia Housing Association. There are a number of advantages to the site which we feel makes it a good location for the school, the most important being the size, affordability and improved access to the playing fields. Not only would the school enjoy direct access to the playing fields, but as part of the overall package, the council would improve the existing sports facilities and invest in new sports facilities which would be made available to local residents through shared use arrangements.

We recognise that some local residents have legitimate concerns about the plans, for example about the impact on traffic, noise and green space. We are committed to working with residents to discuss and address all concerns as far as possible. No detailed plans for the extent of the site or proposed layout of the school have yet been published. These plans will be developed over

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the coming months taking into account the concerns raised, following which we will consult local residents on the plans. We hope that through careful planning and design it will be possible to develop proposals that allow for the school to be built on the site while addressing the concerns raised. (See appendix A, copy of letter sent to residents 11 August 2006).

g) Joint Service Centre

E Poulsen commented that Essex Hall was now only a Day Centre for older persons with dementia. She noted that the 'grandiose' plans for a Joint Service Centre with surgery, café, library, community centre, nursery and day centre at one location had now been dropped on financial grounds with the centre part completed at the nursery stage. The day centre members have been told that they cannot get back in until May next year. She wanted clarification on the situation.

Response:

Although the detailed plans for the Joint Service Centre have changed somewhat over time to reflect what has been considered desirable and feasible, the new facility is still expected to include a Children's Centre offering flexible childcare and services for parents, a re-provided day-care centre and a range of other services such as business support, training, youth work and community space. In addition, the First Response, Home Visiting, Joint Visiting and HIV teams will all relocate back to the new premises.

The Children's Centre is scheduled to be completed in October 2006 while the programme for refurbishment of the remaining building is scheduled to commence in December 2006 and be completed in June 2007. The day-care centre has temporarily relocated during the construction of the Children's Centre to avoid the noise and dust. Although they could return now they would have to move again for the refurbishment works starting in December so it makes more sense for them to delay returning until next summer when the works are completed.

In addition, the Waltham Forest Primary Care Trust (responsible for GP services in the area) has informed us that it intends to develop a new health centre, provisionally to be located as part of the Joint Service Centre (although other locations in the area have not been ruled out). The new centre would bring together three of the area's existing GP practices in purpose built premises with room for expansion plus the facilities needed to offer additional services such as minor operations, family planning clinics, diet and nutrition clinics, group therapy, specialist optometry and retinal screening. There would also be shared office space, group room and shared staff facilities. The timetable for construction of the new health centre has still to be decided.

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7) Street Wardens

K Lord requested clarification on the Street Wardens role, the scope of their activities and what the boundaries were for their activities.

Response: Michelle Bridge, Street Warden Manager.

Street Wardens provide a physical, uniformed presence on the streets to prevent and deter crime and reduce the fear of crime among local residents, businesses and visitors to the area. They patrol the streets on foot six days a week, generally between 8.00am and until up to 10.00pm.

The warden presence is maximised in the afternoon and early evening. This is because reported street crime and antisocial behaviour is at its highest during these times. A number of crime hotspots have been identified and are patrolled on a regular basis.

Street Wardens currently patrol High Street, Markhouse and Wood Street Wards areas within Walthamstow. Wardens also patrol areas of Leyton and Leytonstone.

Wardens are able to act as the eyes and ears of the community. Unfortunately the Patrol area does not extend to Greenleaf Road although Wardens do attend 3 meetings on a regular basis at this location. There is no indication that patrol areas will be extended to this Road at present.

In addition to patrolling Wardens will contribute to the development of a stronger community and encourage participation in community-based activities, services and public meetings. For example we have been able to build relationships of trust with individuals and communities, and raise individuals' awareness of opportunities to participate in events and to become more locally empowered.

With respect to young people Street Wardens aim be positive role models, we want to engage them in stimulating activities as a diversionary tactic, and build up their sense of community and pride in the local area.

Waltham Forest Wardens already work closely with schools. Wardens have attended assemblies to talk about crime and anti social behaviour. As well as involve school children in visual audits of their area. Street Wardens can often be seen patrolling outside schools at the end of the school day. Wardens also have a number of weekly football projects running in Walthamstow for young people.

Street Wardens visit community meetings both inside and outside of their boundary. The street wardens are able to provide advice and assistance about crime, if the Wardens don't know the answer they can help you to find

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someone who can provide the advice or support you need, such as a police Crime Prevention Officer or a specialist advice agency in the area.

Street Wardens contribute to the quality of the local environment, not only by preventing and deterring anti-social behaviour, vandalism, graffiti, and the like but by ensuring that environmental nuisance (such as abandoned vehicles, dumped rubbish etc) are removed quickly by Environmental Services. Similarly defective lighting, street furniture and the like will be reported.

Street Wardens can be contacted on the 020 8496 1781 generally between 10am and 6pm. Or in writing at Street Wardens, Rowan House, 1 Cecil Road, Leytonstone, London, E11 3HF

The wardens are not an alternative to the Police. Neither do they have the same powers as the Police. If you see a crime - or are unfortunate enough to be the victim of a crime - you should still phone the police on 999.

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11th August 2006

A number of residents have written to express concerns about plans to relocate Willowfield School to a new site just south of Blackhorse Road Station, adjacent to (and including part of) the Douglas Eyre Playing Fields. I thought it would be useful to write to you to provide the latest information on the development of proposals for the area, to respond to some of the concerns raised, and to reassure you that all comments and concerns expressed to the Council will be fully considered and taken on board in refining the draft plans for the Blackhorse Lane area. We are also aware that someone has circulated a leaflet to local residents alerting you to the plans.

Willowfield School is a successful secondary school that is in urgent need of modern premises. The existing site on Clifton Avenue is not large enough to meet the educational needs of a modern secondary school of the size of Willowfield. Pupils at the school lack external play space and have to make do with outdated and cramped facilities. The school, teachers and pupils do a very good job in making the best of the facilities there and the school provides high quality education. But the school and its pupils – not just current pupils but those who will be attending the school over many years into the future – would benefit from a wholly new, 21st century school building on a new site. Funding has been secured from central government and the Council to achieve this.

The Council has been working with the staff and Governing Body of the school for several years now to try to find a suitable site in the area. Several other sites have been considered and rejected for a variety of reasons.

Earlier this year we started considering relocating the school to a site at the north end of the Douglas Eyre playing field, comprising some of that field and an adjacent area of land owned by Circle Anglia Housing Association. The field itself is owned by the London Playing Fields Foundation. This proposal would deliver a number of significant advantages to school pupils, the local community and sports clubs that use the Playing Fields:

- The site would allow for a new school building designed and constructed to the highest standards, to provide a much-enhanced teaching and learning environment for local children and to enhance the local built environment.
- The current numbers of playing pitches would be maintained
- As part of the package, the council would work with the London Playing Fields Foundation and invest in the playing fields to create at Douglas Eyre a high quality range of sports facilities. New facilities would be created for shared use

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between the school and the community, provisionally to include a new artificial pitch, an indoor sports hall, hard surfaced play areas, a new pavilion and changing facilities. These improvements would help the borough to make the most of the Olympics by maximising the interest and participation of local people in sport.

- The new school facilities would act as a resource both for the school itself and also for the local community, with the potential for community sports, learning, leisure and social activities to take place within the school buildings.

We recognise that you and other local residents have legitimate concerns about the proposals. We are committed to working with you to discuss and address all of your concerns as far as possible. We believe that through careful planning and design it will be possible to develop proposals that allow for the school to be built on the site while addressing the concerns raised.

The consultation process

A number of residents have expressed concern that they have not been consulted on the plans and that the plans appear to be 'at an advanced stage'. In fact, detailed plans for the exact location and layout of the school have not yet been developed, your concerns will be taken into account in developing these and we will consult with you on the detailed plans once available.

What has been published for consultation is a draft Planning Policy Framework for the Blackhorse Lane area as a whole which includes the proposal to relocate the school to a site adjacent to, and partly on, the playing fields and includes some broad guidance for the development which I will refer to at relevant points in this letter.

On 16th June we circulated to all local homes (including those in Edward Road and adjoining roads) a consultation booklet summarising the draft plans for the Blackhorse Lane area. A copy of the can be accessed at www.walthamforest.gov.uk/blackhorselane. Although it covered a range of proposals for the wider area, the booklet included the statement: "*It is proposed to move Willowfield School to a new site just south of Blackhorse Road Station, adjacent to (and including part of) the Douglas Eyre Playing Fields. The purpose built school would offer more space and direct access to outdoor sports facilities.*" The booklet explained how to obtain the full plans and asked for comments on the plans by the end of July.

Traffic and parking

Many residents are concerned that the new school will create additional traffic and parking problems along Hawarden Road and Edward Road. The non-Council leaflet circulated to local residents states that 'access for both the school and the sports facilities will be at the top of Edward Road'. In fact,

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options for access arrangements to the school, sports fields and proposed new housing development are still being considered. In particular, we are talking to the developers of the site between Hawarden Road and Blackhorse Road Station about the potential to provide access to the school through their site.

We are aware that Edward Road and Hawarden Road are narrow residential streets and we would not wish to create traffic congestion. As such, the draft planning framework states that the design of the proposed school “should carefully consider the relationship with existing housing to the south and seek to minimise noise and traffic disturbance for residents” (draft Blackhorse Lane Interim Planning Policy Framework, Section 12.1 k).

We are in the process of undertaking a detailed traffic assessment and transport strategy for the school which will form the basis of a school travel plan setting out in detail how the school will minimise and manage traffic and encourage walking and cycling. While there may have to be an access at the corner of Edward Road and Hawarden Road, this may be one of a number of accesses which would be part of a new traffic management regime which could also reduce through-traffic using Edward Road. The intention is that parking for the school and sports fields and a drop off / pick up area would both be provided fully within the school site so as not to affect local resident parking. It is also worth noting Willowfield School has one of the smallest catchment areas of all schools in the borough, with 87% of pupils living within a mile of the school, so few pupils are driven to school.

In terms of traffic congestion in the area more generally, the draft planning framework proposes a number of improvements to the local road network aimed at reducing congestion and improving the pedestrian crossings at the Standard Junction at Blackhorse Road Station. In particular, a new road is proposed linking Forest Road west of Blackhorse Road Station with Blackhorse Lane to remove some traffic from the Standard Junction.

Loss of green belt land / views.

Several people have emphasised the quiet nature of the area due to being adjacent to the playing fields and expressed concern about loss of green belt land including the impact on open views over the fields. The Council recognises that building on green belt land should only occur in very special circumstances. In this case, we believe there are such special circumstances, in particular:

- It is the only viable site in the area of sufficient size to accord with government recommendations.

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- The significant benefits in terms of securing investment in the sports facilities and meeting the educational, leisure and other needs of the local community outweigh the loss of a small amount of green belt land.
- A limited degree of additional built development is proposed and it will not reduce the existing number of useable sports pitches.

We believe that good layout and design of the school can ensure that the open aspect and quiet feel of the area is maintained. For example, the site outlined on the map on the non-Council leaflet is from the published draft plans but is only indicative and our latest thinking is that the final site may be quite different, with the school buildings situated along the very northern edge of the playing fields, further from local homes.

Disturbance from school children

Several residents have stated that they are worried about noise and anti-social behaviour from young people before and after school. In designing the access to the school we will try to minimise any noise and disturbance to local residents and we will work with the school to ensure that young people behave respectfully to local neighbours. But it is worth stating that on its current site Willowfield School has an excellent relationship with residents who live adjacent to the school at its current location (some of whom have asked if the school can stay, so happy are they with it).

High density housing development

The site between Hawarden Road and Blackhorse Road Station has already been identified for housing development in the Council's Unitary Development Plan on which there has been extensive public consultation over the last few years. The proposal now being developed is for Willowfield School to be relocated to part of this site (the part currently owned by Circle Anglia Housing) as well as part of the playing fields. The remainder of the site would be developed for housing as specified in the Unitary Development Plan. Although it is correct that there are likely to be several hundred homes built on the site, many will be flats (including affordable homes for key workers such as nurses and teachers) and due to its location right next to the station, parking provision will be very limited (and residents will not be able to purchase permits for the Controlled Parking Zone) so the impact on traffic will be limited.

While the draft planning framework states that there may be scope for some taller buildings, it makes clear that these should be located in the northern portion of the site immediately adjacent to the station and railway line and that "new buildings facing existing two-storey terraced housing (e.g. ... on Hawarden Road) should be sensitive to this existing urban fabric." (draft Blackhorse Lane Interim Planning Policy Framework Section 12.1c).

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The non-Council leaflet suggests that an alternative would be to build the school on the site between Hawarden Road and Blackhorse Road Station instead of building housing. The Council does not own this site and it is not for sale, so this is not a realistic option.

Disturbance from construction work

It is inevitable that there will be some noise and disruption to local residents during the construction of the school and adjacent housing, but we will work with contractors to minimise disruption and control noise and traffic, including by seeking to create access for construction vehicles other than through Edward Road / Hawarden Road.

Moving forwards

I hope that this letter has given you reassurance that we do take your concerns seriously and are committed to addressing them. Once more detailed plans are developed over the coming months we will contact you again to outline the plans, ask for your comments and invite you to a public meeting or exhibition to discuss the proposals. At that stage we will be able to have a constructive discussion about the likely impact of the plans and how best to ensure they do not have a negative impact on the quality of life of local residents.

I look forward to working with you to resolve these issues.

Councillor Terry Wheeler
Portfolio Holder for Enterprise and Investment

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