

Proposal to Burgess Hill Town Council

From West Sussex County Council

Folders Meadow Playing Field, Folders Lane, Burgess Hill

Report 2nd March 2020

1. Summary

- West Sussex County Council (WSSC) is currently exploring practical options to deliver new premises at Woodlands Meed College (WMC) in Burgess Hill.
- One of the options for redeveloping Woodlands Meed College would require access for construction traffic over the adjacent Folders Meadow Playing Field.
- Alternative access is via Birchwood Grove Road, using the entrance road to the neighbouring school Birchwood Grove Primary School. This is also being investigated further but presents some challenges with the proximity to the school premises and tight turning spaces.
- A technical consultant employed by WSSC has carried out an appraisal of the Folders Lane access option detailing the proposed construction and the physical and environmental constraints of a temporary access track across the playing field.
- WSSC have also carried out some preliminary investigations into the ownership of land necessary to facilitate this option and potential process for securing the relevant approvals and permissions.

2. Proposal

- Burgess Hill Town Council is asked to support the further exploration of this option with the field's owners – the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA).
- WSSC will cover all reasonable costs associated with this investigation.

3. Background

- Folders Meadow Playing Field has been owned by the National Playing Fields Association since 1982.
- Fields in Trust is the operating name for the National Playing Fields Association.
- The site is managed on behalf of NPFA by Burgess Hill Town Council.
- An initial legal title investigation has revealed a restrictive covenant prohibiting vehicular access from Folders Lane through the site, therefore seeking to release the restrictions of the covenant could be complex. Title WSX293617 (TQ3218SW).
- In an initial exchange of e-mails, the NPFA, trading as Fields in Trust, advised that the property has a restrictive covenant preventing such a use as proposed, so while they can't prejudge a decision of the Trustees they anticipate that they would find it difficult to grant approval.
- A full title investigation will be carried out prior to commencing any works to ensure that there are no other restrictions affecting the use of the property
- The application for consent from NPFA needs to be led by Burgess Hill Town Council and could require conclusion of planning consent, consultation and consent from the Charities Commission, before the NPFA would agree the proposal.

- Mid Sussex DC and/or Lindon Wates Ltd permission may also be required if the proposed access track needs to cross over any land held by these parties at the point where Folders Land abuts Woodlands Mead land. This will be explored separately.

4. Details of the Proposal

- The proposal is to gain access to the construction site from Folders Lane via the Recreation Grounds. The accessibility of the construction site via this route was tested using the Auto Track software and swept path analysis; drawings are included in Appendix A.
- A new access to the Folders Meadow Playing Field will need to be constructed in the form of a 20m wide bell-mouth junction. Subject to a TPO (Tree Preservation Order) survey, existing trees and hedges will need to be removed to facilitate access and visibility splays at the junction. This will include some of the mature trees along Folders Lane. Although these trees will be replaced with mature trees, it should be noted the new trees will be smaller in size.
- A temporary construction track will need to be constructed to facilitate access to the site. The track will be offset from the existing trees to ensure that this is not constructed within tree root protection zones. A tree survey will be commissioned to identify a more precise location of the construction track. On completion of the construction phase, this area will be re-instated and this would require a further period of restrictive access.
- The existing footway and cycleway from Singleton Way will need to be closed during the construction phase.
- This is a 22-month construction programme which includes; Phase 1 comprising of 16 months for new build and; Phase 2 comprising of 6 months for demolition and remaining external works.

5. Next Steps

- Fields in Trust have advised that if WSCC wish to make a formal request for Fields in Trust's consent the first step is to seek agreement from Burgess Hill Town Council, who are responsible for management of the site. If the Town Council approve the proposal it is then required to request consent from Fields in Trust through the established Field Change Request process.

6. Planning Consent from Mid Sussex District Council will also be required.

- A planning application could take from 8 to 16 weeks depending if an Environmental Impact assessment would be needed. Subject to the Town Council's view, the proposal will be discussed with Mid Sussex planners and WSCC Highways teams.

7. Consultation with Neighbouring Property Owners

- Given the nature of the proposal and the requirement by Fields in Trust to demonstrate that suitable consultation has been taken, consultation with neighbours, playing field users and other stakeholders would likely be required.