

Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee

Date:	31 January 2017
Title:	Community Facilities Working Group (CFWG)
Contact Officer:	Graham Hunt, Town Clerk Cllr Nichola Dixon, Chair of CFWG

Purpose of this Report

1. To provide an update on the work of the Community Facilities Working Group (CFWG) since the last meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee.

Update

2. The notes of the first meeting of the Community Facilities Working Group had been circulated on 16 December 2016.
3. A useful meeting was held on 12 January 2017 with representatives of the Cattle Market Action Group and Leap Design Group. The Town Clerk's file note was:
 - CMAG / TTC / LEAP meeting re community facility requirements (12/1/17)
 - a) Val / Barrie / Helena from LEAP
 - b) Kelvin / Ephraim from LEAP
 - c) Nichola / Graham / Graeme from TTC
 - d) Val talked through how CMAG had gathered information in 2007/9/12 – via a variety of means – the resulting data base record had already been shared with Kelvin of LEAP
 - e) It was agreed that data base is a good start point
 - f) There have been numerous impacting changes since 2012/3 and requirement has moved further forward – probably expanded
 - i. New organisations with new needs (e.g. Music Festival)
 - ii. Expanded organisations with expanded needs (e.g. TAL)
 - iii. Businesses that may have additional off-site needs
 - g) There has been some database refinement as new requirements have been established
 - h) There may be other questions that could now usefully be asked – e.g. growth aspirations
 - i) Agreed that further update is needed of that CMAG database
 - j) LEAP provided a summary of work they are already doing on community needs analysis
 - k) Agreed a way forward would be to ask LEAP for a costed proposal for them to:
 - i. Bring database up to date with current known requirement
 - ii. Create a stand-alone outline Design Brief based on that updated requirement
 - l) There were other discussions, including:
 - i. The need to test the requirement – to ensure the evidence base is robust
 - ii. The fact that the solution could be provided at a site other than the Cattle Market site
 - iii. Part of the solution may be provided by the Lord Williams's single site master plan
 - iv. SODC / TTC Retail capacity studies – and what they may be leading to in terms of defined need for additional “edge of centre” convenience store capacity
 - v. The potential for a solution to be part of another initiative
 - vi. Relationship with SODC / SODC latest motives re Cattle Market site
 - vii. The need for a Business Plan [once a solution is homed in on]

- viii. Funding sources – and Community Infrastructure Levy / s106 in particular
- ix. Previous proposals for Cattle Market site
 - x. Community Right to Build option
 - xi. The need for TTC / CMAG to keep working together
 - xii. Other organisations that may now need to define their requirements (schools?)
 - xiii. Linked Trips
- xiv. Impact of revised Local Plan on the Cattle Market site
- xv. A professional approach (e.g. via LEAP) will add weight to any future proposals / discussions with SODC

4. A useful update was separately provided by Lord Williams's school on 21 December 2016 and a meeting for further discussion is being set in the week commencing 20 February 2017:

"Thanks for your note. I think you are right – it would be good to further update the Town Council on the school's progress.

As you are aware, the endeavours to provide replacement pitch provision (in order to satisfy Sport England) include an ongoing discussion with the rugby club in the first instance. This is making slow progress as the rugby club are dependent on either a long lease or sale of space by the Thame Show (Thame And Oxfordshire County Agricultural Association). My understanding is that the Thame Show have yet to make a decision on leasing or selling land to the rugby club.

There is still some progress being made with regard to bringing into operation some scrub land (at the end of one of the pitches) and upgrading one training pitch at the rugby club as a partial solution. The Sport England 'requirement' also includes some improved cricket facilities at the Oxford Road (Upper School) site and commitments to community use agreements (for sporting facilities) which the school are very willing to enter into.

It remains to be seen whether a reduced number / size of pitch(es) at the rugby club, albeit with some enhancements (either upgrading to all weather surface and/or drainage) will satisfy Sport England. The other options for land for pitches around Thame have drawn a blank at this point. Clearly the Thame Show need to put their interests first, but were they prepared to support the club, that would unblock one of the key hurdles with regard to disposing of the Towersey Road (Lower School) site.

The school have been progressing their single-site masterplan (for the Oxford Road site). This is being done in part in order to be able to determine the concept design and therefore quantify the cost of building onto the Upper School site and, in part, as good practice to assess current and future maintenance needs of the current building stock. An updated draft of the masterplan has been prepared and, though there is still some work to do to separate single-site consolidation activities (and therefore costs) from necessary enhancements and replacements of existing stock, the school would like to share this vision for the site. The summaries for the performing arts building and sports hall were extracted from the masterplan.

It is of note that the school has been successful with grant applications to the Education Funding Agency to date with regard to necessary enhancements and replacements of existing building stock. Each time they make an application, the school does so with the longer term goal in mind. Two applications are currently being considered – one for renewal of some heating systems and one for a replacement teaching block (for the Hayter building).

The school has spent a significant amount from its budget on the development of plans and contributing to capital expenditure (as grant funding to date has covered 90% of capital costs). The educational reasons for bringing both the cohorts together are overwhelming and there are logistical issues in managing a large teaching staff across two sites. The school sees the investment made to date - in both time and money - as necessary to progress the aspiration enshrined in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Even though the school is an Academy (and therefore funded directly by central government), Oxfordshire County Council have a significant role to play in securing the school's consolidation onto a single site. Firstly, they own the Towersey Road site and will seek to achieve the highest value for the site in order to fund the single-site consolidation. In addition, they control section 106 funds held and still to be received for the provision of new school places. It will come as no surprise that the masterplan provides teaching

accommodation for 12 forms of entry (360 students), rather than the current 11 forms of entry. It is anticipated that the proportion of the new build that provides these extra places will be funded by section 106 contributions, subject of course to them being available. The school are in dialogue with Oxfordshire County Council and will continue this conversation in 2017.

The performing arts building is an element of the masterplan which has dual use. The school's requirement is for a hall / performance space to seat 360 students as well as dance, drama and music teaching space. Outside of the school day, the school has very limited requirement for the facility and a number of use models have been discussed. These range from the school letting out the building to local groups through to a commercial operator running the building with school use limited to 8:30 to 4:30 Monday to Friday. The school needs to unlock funding streams other than the Education Funding Agency and is therefore open to alternative ways in which the building could be operated. The building is proposed to be located adjacent to the Leisure Centre with immediate access to increased parking, so would lend itself to public / community use. The school are at concept design stage and it would be opportune to consider how the Communities Facilities Working Group could influence the design and support the funding of what could be a great community facility.

The thorny issue of the viability of the Towersey Road site with the housing numbers set out in the Neighbourhood Plan remains. The school have instructed us to investigate the costs of preparing a design brief and appointing consultants to assess the viability of the development as currently proposed. This work is to be progressed in the New Year and will need to be shared with Oxfordshire County Council prior to making any appointment of consultants.

I would imagine that a discussion at the end of January / early February would be constructive in terms of the performing arts building, the wider masterplan and any progress with regard to pitches / satisfying Sport England. It will likely take a further couple of months before the school are likely to be in a position to provide any update in terms of grant funding success and/or the appointment of consultants to advise on the Towersey Road site."

5. Leap Design Group has now provided a proposal for the discussed further work defined in 3k above. The proposal, for a total amount of £5,550 plus normal expenses is attached. The Town Clerk and Chair of the CFWG recommend that Leap Design Group are engaged as defined in the proposal, with costs to be covered by s106 funds already received by SODC for Community Facilities. In the unlikely event of SODC refusing such an application for s106 funds, then there are sufficient funds to cover in the remaining Neighbourhood Plan Professional Fees budgets for 2016-17 and 2017-18.

Action Required:

6. To note the report and approve the engagement of Leap Design Group.