

AGENDA ITEM NO.

REPORT TO:	Planning Committee
REPORT NO.	CPLO/50/04
DATE:	26 July 2004
REPORTING OFFICER:	Chief Planning Officer
CONTACT OFFICER:	Wynford Rowlands (Ext 2512)
SUBJECT:	Nine Acre Field, Chester Road, Wrexham
WARD:	Maesydre

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide information on the results of public consultation on Draft Development Guidance for the Nine Acre Field, Chester Road, Wrexham.

INFORMATION

- 1 Draft Development Guidance for the Nine Acre Field was approved for public consultation by the Member/Officer Group on Secondary Schools Reorganisation on 24th March 2004. Public consultation was carried out over a four week period ending on 14th May, 2004.
- 2 The guidance suggested two options for development on the site:
 - housing development on the eastern one-fifth (about 0.8 hectares) if this allowed the retention and enhancement of the existing facility;
 - housing development on the eastern one-third (about 1.2 hectares), if the loss of this land as playing field was replaced with an equivalent or greater provision in the immediate locality.
- 3 Letters of objection were received from five organisations: Acton Community Council, North East Wales Football Association, Rhosddu Community Council, and the Sports Council for Wales. Wrexham Area Civic Society were opposed in principle to any loss of open space, but felt that the proposal to develop a small part of the field would be acceptable if this allowed the retention and enhancement of the existing facility.
- 4 87 letters of objection were received from local residents. Two letters stated that the proposal to develop no more than one-fifth of the playing field would be acceptable.

One letter stated that the proposal for housing on the eastern one-third was the best option. Adding together all letters gives the following result:

- 92 letters of objection (96%);
- 4 letters of support (4%).

A further 11 letters were received after the end of the consultation period, all of them letters of objection. The principal grounds of objection to the draft guidance are summarised in the appendix to this report.

- 5 On 6 July 2004, the Executive Board resolved:
 - (i) That, having regard to the outcome of the public consultation exercise on the draft planning guidance, the Nine Acre Field be retained by the Council for use as public open space.
 - (ii) That the relevant officers prepare a report for submission to a future meeting of the Board, outlining possible options to make the site more accessible to the public and so increase its use as public open space.
- 6 Because the Council, as landowner, has decided not to proceed with the development of part of the Nine Acre Field, but to retain it for use as public open space, there is now no need to have a development brief for the site. No further work will therefore be undertaken on the brief.

RECOMMENDATION

That Members note the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nine Acre Field, Chester Road, Wrexham: Draft Development Guidance.

WEBSITE INFORMATION

None.

APPENDIX

Nine Acre Field: Draft Development Guidance: Principal Grounds of Objection

- **Effect on the local environment:** building houses on the open space would have a detrimental effect on the local environment.
- **Loss of an important green space:** Nine Acre Field is an important green space, providing a pleasant gateway to Wrexham.
- **Need to retain land for sport and recreation:** the field is used extensively for sport and recreation, and should be retained to provide for the needs of present and future needs.
- **Council mismanagement of the schools project:** the proposals have far more to do with covering the financial losses incurred by the Council in the mismanagement of the schools project. Alternative means of finding the necessary finance should be investigated.
- **Nine Acre Field still needed for public/community use:** the assertion that the whole of Nine Acre Field may no longer be required for public/community use is not substantiated.
- **Deficit of playing fields:** there is a deficit of playing fields in the immediate locality and Wrexham as a whole. The sale of part of the field would exacerbate the deficit.
- **Effect on pitches:** the eastern rugby pitch would be lost: this would put increasing pressure on remaining pitches, which would deteriorate.
- **No proposals to retain and enhance the Nine Acre Field:** the guidance does not show how the existing facility would be retained and enhanced, as required by the UDP.
- **No proposals to replace facility:** the guidance does not show how the loss of part of the playing field would be replaced by equivalent/greater provision in the immediate locality, as required by the UDP.
- **Need to make the field more accessible:** the Council should make the Nine Acre Field more accessible to local people.
- **20% is not a "small part of the site":** it would be the "thin end of the wedge" and further development proposals would follow.
- **Need to use brownfield land first:** Nine Acre Field should only be developed when all brownfield sites have been exhausted.
- **No need for extra housing land:** there is no immediate shortfall of housing land in Wrexham to justify developing part of the Nine Acre Field.
- **Legal covenants:** the guidance does not address the issue of the covenant which secures the field for educational and recreational use only.
- **Need to meet future space standards:** selling land would compromise the Council's ability to meet possible future increases in space standards.
- **Increased traffic:** increased traffic resulting from residential development will cause problems at the junction of Chester Road with Westminster Drive.