

## **Danegrove Playing Field - Planning Brief Scope**

### **1 Contents**

1.1 The purpose of this document is to set out the scope for a detailed planning brief for the potential development of the Danegrove playing field and covers the following items:

- Introduction and background
- Objectives of the development
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- Spatial strategy
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- Planning strategy

### **2 Introduction and Background**

2.1 The feasibility study into the future of the Council's portfolio of five leisure centres was undertaken in parallel with a broader Sport and Physical Activity Review (SPA), and is underpinned by the Council's need to:

- provide fit for purpose facilities for its residents
- improve public health outcomes
- deliver a service that is as close to revenue neutral as possible.

2.2 The feasibility study sought ultimately to establish what facilities the Council requires, where they might be located, how much they would cost to build and run (where new developments are required) and how much they would generate in revenue. The existing management contract with Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) is due to expire in December 2017. This study provides a framework through which a procurement exercise can be undertaken for a new management operator.

2.2 In seeking to provide fit for purposes facilities in the future a review of the condition of the existing centres and needs assessment was undertaken which concluded that investment is needed as a priority at two centres including Church Farm. Constructed in 1960 the centre only accommodates a non-standard 19m, 3 lane swimming pool and activity hall. It is dated and generally in a very poor condition with significant and costly defects likely to become more commonplace. Critically it is accepted that the centre does not provide the facilities and services to cater for and support current and future local need.

2.3 The site of Church Farm itself is also not ideal as it is significantly constrained and secluded from the main road. It offers no possibility for expansion or major redevelopment and car parking very is limited which limits usage.

2.4 In looking at future investment opportunities therefore the feasibility study considered possible alternative sites for a replacement Church Farm facility. A site options appraisal was undertaken to establish appropriate locations based on a series of factors including catchment area, planning context, site availability, nature of location and accessibility.

2.5 The exercise identified 3 preferred locations namely Danegrove Playing Field, Brunswick Park and Oakhill Park.

### **3 Objectives of the development**

- 3.1 One of the Council's key aspirations concerns ensuring its leisure facility stock is fit for purpose, meets customers' expectations and supports the improvement of the health of the borough. However, associated with this, there is an imperative to deliver a service that is as close to neutral revenue cost as possible. The potential relocation of Church Farm offers a significant opportunity for an integrated sports and leisure provision locally and supports the Council's strategic objective of delivering increased participation in sport.
- 3.2 In proposing a new facility and securing planning permission in a different location it is critical that all relevant requirements, constraints and opportunities are considered carefully and comprehensively. The design of any new facility must cater for need and reflect the corporate objectives in relation to public health outcomes whilst respecting the nature of its location and providing appropriate mitigation as necessary.
- 3.3 The preparation of a planning brief for the site at Danegrove Playing Fields will provide a framework to guide the design and development of a new leisure and sports facility, ensuring that the character and amenity of the surrounding area is respected and serve as a constructive means of engaging and consulting with the local community in the process.
- 3.4 It should be noted that the option of Danegrove playing field can only proceed if the land is declared surplus to educational requirements further to which a Section 77 application of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 can be applied for to establish whether or not the land can be released from playing field use.

### **4 The Site**

- 4.1 Danegrove playing field occupies a site of approximately 8,127 sqm/0.8Ha/2 acres of land on the corner of Park Road and Cat Hill trunk road (A110) in the ward of East Barnet. It is owned freehold by the Council and designated for educational use associated with Danegrove Primary School which occupies two sites nearby. The land however is unused in part due to its lack of amenity, topography and poor drainage.



*View across site towards Park Road*

- 4.2 The site comprises a prominent, rectangular level grassed piece of land elevated about 1m above the adjoining highway featuring a steep bank on its frontage to Cat Hill.
- 4.3 It is bounded by Cat Hill allotments and interwar suburban housing to the east with Belmont Open Space beyond and more housing opposite and to the north along Park Road. The surrounding area is predominantly in residential in use although East Barnet Library and East Barnet and St Mary's Schools are also located in the vicinity.
- 4.4 The site is conveniently located very near the town centres of East Barnet Village and New Barnet and is less than a mile from New Barnet and Oakleigh Park overground stations and Cockfosters Underground Station.
- 4.5 Church farm leisure centre is sited just under a mile away to the south.

## 5 Scope of development

- 5.1 Based on a comprehensive needs assessment, the SPA feasibility study identified a preferred specification and mix of uses for a potential new Church Farm leisure centre.
- 5.2 Given a clear need for additional swimming and health and fitness provision in this part of the borough (particularly as a consequence of forecasted population growth), it proposes a new wet and dry centre with the following key facility mix:
- 25m, 6 lane pool
  - Learner pool with moveable floor
  - 70-75 station gym
  - 2 dance studios
  - Café.

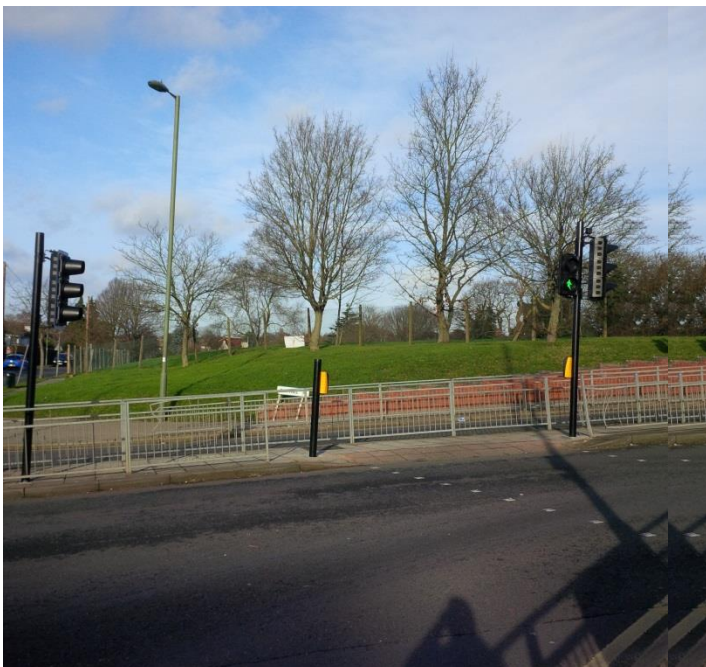


*View of site across Park Road towards Cat Hill*

- 5.3 In addition, given the lack of provision in the area, the study also considers inclusion of a six-court sports hall.
- 5.4 The planning brief will examine the nature and potential mix of uses in detail having regard to the characteristics of the site at Danegrove playing field.

## 6 Spatial Strategy

- 6.1 The Danegrove playing field presents a number of constraints and opportunities which will influence the quantum, type and mix of uses that may be accommodated on site.
- 6.2 The site is in principle of a sufficient size to accommodate the preferred new build specification, it is also highly visible on the junction of two main roads and given its location close to nearby town centres is accessible and offers potential for links to other facilities locally in terms of usage.
- 6.3 The site slopes across its length down towards Park Road and it is also elevated which may have implications in relation to the visual impact of any development, particularly relative to neighbouring residential properties and those opposite on Park Road. Substantial and mature trees provide a green backdrop along the northern and eastern boundaries of the site and form a screen for adjoining properties. A number of trees are also located on the frontage with Cat Hill.
- 6.4 The site is served by a single vehicular point of access off Park Road at its northern end.
- 6.5 In considering how any development might be configured, it important that it is set back from Park Road and beds into the site to minimise its presence for neighbouring residential uses. It is also critical that adequate access is provided given the proximity of the main junction.



*View across Cat Hill towards site*

- 6.6 The planning brief will explore a number of development options for the site having regard to the following matters:
- Site conditions and topography

- Natural features including existing trees
- Wildlife habitat and biodiversity
- Neighbouring residential amenity
- Access, highway and parking implications
- Character and form of surrounding area
- User and service requirements
- Planning policy
- Consultation responses
- Mitigation measures

## 7 Planning context

- 7.1 Planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations which indicate otherwise. The development plan for Barnet is the London Plan and the Barnet Local Plan. Local planning authorities should also take account of national planning policy, which is currently set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).



*View across site towards Cat Hill*

- 7.2 There are a number of key strategic and local planning policies set out in the London Plan and Barnet's Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD) which are relevant to the potential development of this site. These concern in particular meeting the challenges of an increasing population, public health outcomes and participation in sports and leisure activities, reducing inequality and delivering high quality, sustainable design.
- 7.3 The London Plan emphasises the importance of catering for the needs of a growing population in ways that ensure a sustainable, good and improving quality of life and help tackle issues of deprivation and inequality including inequality in health outcomes.
- 7.4 In seeking to provide places that promote active and healthier lifestyles, the London Plan supports development proposals that increase or enhance the provision of sports and recreation facilities and emphasises wherever possible, that multi-use public facilities for sport and recreational activity should be encouraged. In addition it states that development should maximize the opportunity for

community diversity, inclusion and cohesion; and should contribute to people's sense of place, safety and security and general well-being.

- 7.5 Where sports facility developments are proposed on existing open space, the London Plan advises that they will need to be considered carefully in light of policies on protecting open space as well as the Barnet's own assessment of needs and opportunities for both sports facilities and for green multifunctional open space.
- 7.6 More generally strategic policy stresses that the design of new buildings and the spaces they create should help reinforce or enhance the character, legibility, permeability and accessibility of a neighbourhood and that development should be sustainable and have regard to the form and function of a place and the scale, mass and orientation of its surroundings in addition to biodiversity.
- 7.7 Barnet's Local Plan similarly seeks to promote healthy living and well-being outcomes by addressing the factors underpinning poor health and well-being and educating citizens as to their own responsibilities for health. It specifically encourages the development of new and improved leisure and sports facilities where demand can be demonstrated and which support wider corporate objectives. In ensuring the efficient use of leisure facilities and greater footfall and participation levels local policy also explores options in relation to co-location and usage with other community provision including schools and open spaces.
- 7.8 The Local Plan accepts development on open space in exceptional circumstances where it is a small-scale use ancillary to the use of the space or results in no net loss or a better quality of provision and does not impact on biodiversity.



*View across length of site from Cat Hill*

- 7.9 Given the locational advantages of the site, its current condition and lack of usage, there is a clear opportunity to bring this otherwise redundant piece of land back into constructive use and secure a significant step change in the quality and accessibility of sports and leisure provision locally.
- 7.10 The planning brief will provide a detailed review of current policy relative to the proposals under consideration and set out the preferred options for delivering a replacement Church Farm facility following a careful assessment of the opportunities and constraints presented by the site and its surroundings.

## 8 Planning strategy

- 8.1 The planning brief will provide guidance for taking forward the development of the Danegrove playing field as an alternative location for Church Farm leisure centre in accordance with planning and wider corporate policy objectives and emerging strategies. It will form the basis of a consultation exercise in June as part of the SPA outline business case exploring the future provision of leisure facilities generally and delivery of potential a new centres more specially. Should this particular alternative site be chosen as an option, the brief will assist in the preparation of a detailed planning application in due course.



*View across Cat Hill frontage*

- 8.2 In preparing the planning brief key stakeholders such as Danegrove Primary School, Sport England and local amenity groups will be engaged, in addition to key service areas including Greenspaces, Leisure and Children’s Services and Public Health, to ensure that the most suitable type and form of development and optimal public health outcomes are enabled in line with corporate policy and emerging strategies.
- 8.3 The brief will set out the process of taking forward any planning application including detailed requirements, risks and timescales.