

Notes from Ralston Community Council Public Meeting: 4th October 2021

Kelburne Hockey Club's CAT application for Ralston Community Sports Centre

Attendance: Approximately 100 residents, 3 local Councillors, 2 MSP's and MP:

- Gavin Newlands - MP (SNP)
- Neil Bibby - MSP (Labour)
- Russel Findlay - MSP (Conservative)
- Neill Graham - Local Cllr (Conservative)
- Jennifer Adam-McGregor - Local Cllr (SNP)
- Jim Sharkey - Local Cllr (Labour)

Views and questions raised by residents:

A resident asked what kind of pitch will be built for £600k?

- ➔ The current AstroTurf pitch will be removed, and a new hockey pitch will be laid on top. This reduces the cost of a new pitch considerably (down from £1.2m).
- ➔ A resident commented that the state of the pitch has been declining, as it has not been maintained well.

A resident was concerned about giving away a community facility to a private club. But also raised concerns about the current levels of noise and foul language occurring, highlighting that the facility needs run better.

A resident raised concerns about the speed that cars currently drive in and out of the Community Sports Centre, highlighting that a child will get hurt.

A resident asked when they would be consulted regarding this proposal? They also raised concerns about the impact on property prices.

A resident emphasised that they were not against Kelburne Hockey Club, however they were fully against a community asset being given away.

A resident asked whether the hockey pitch could go at the site of the new Grammar instead?

A resident stated they were against the proposal, highlighting that there was nothing in the area for the elderly now that classes have stopped in the Community Sports Centre.

A resident highlighted that it would be very difficult to solve the drainage problem on the grass, because the soil is clay based. Significant investment would be needed.

A resident stated that surely the children from Ralston should be the ones to benefit from the facility, rather than a private club from elsewhere.

A resident felt that Kelburne's presentation was poorly prepared, as answers to some simple questions could not be given in enough depth and there were contradictions.

A resident asked how long the lease was for, and what area was covered.

- ➔ Kelburne are applying for a 50-year lease, covering the whole area – pitches, pavilion and grass area. Kelburne have said that access to the grass area will be maintained for public to play or walk dogs.
- ➔ The resident stated that the lease must be properly developed, including specific conditions on what can and cannot be done by them.

A resident raised concerns that the loss of this facility may do to the mental health of the children who currently use it but will no longer have access.

- ➔ Councillor Adam-McGregor highlighted that the initial proposal from Kelburne was to provide like for like, therefore no loss of access; however, this seems to have changed over time.

A resident highlighted that the facility for Community Asset Transfer was there to bring derelict or underused facilities back into public use, however this facility is well used. It seems that in this case CAT is being used to get a great facility, cheaply. This facility needs investment, not a CAT.

- ➔ Gavin Newlands (MP) stated that there is no precedent for this type of transfer. He also stated that Kelburne had not approached him to discuss their proposal. He was particularly surprised that the application for a licence had not been included in Phase 1 of the plan, as this would be required to help bring in that level of income budgeted for.

A resident was concerned that kids in particular would suffer from this loss and was very concerned about the potential for a bar in a later phase.

A resident highlighted that the facility should be available for all, not just when hockey wouldn't be using it.

A resident stated that currently traffic was at saturation point at times and speed is excessive. If the pavilion is used as a social club in the future, it could be rented for weddings etc, making the situation worse. This facility should be used for the benefit of the community.

A resident highlighted that previous bids for this land were better than Kelburne's proposal; however the inclusion of a licence in those bids meant that we could not support them. This facility must be kept for the community.

A resident stated that it's important for Kelburne to get a pitch somewhere, however it must enhance sports participation overall. Since over 1000 people use the football pitches currently, use of the hockey pitches couldn't match this, and so fewer people would be involved in physical activity as a result. They were also concerned that it wasn't at all clear where Kelburne would access the £600k required for their proposal.

A resident asked what the process was for residents to give their views to the Council on this proposal?

- ➔ Councillor Adam-McGregor stated that a form would be posted in the pavilion for residents to note their concerns however the facility is currently closed so residents should check the Community Council website and Facebook pages for guidance.
- ➔ Councillor Sharkey highlighted that residents could also write to the Council's Chief Executive. (Please copy in The RCC Admin address if you do this)
- ➔ RCC Chair, Allan Thomson, highlighted that we would also update by newsletter.

A resident highlighted that Kelburne's presentation stated that the Head Teacher of Ralston Primary was in support of the proposal. However, when questioned about this, the Head Teacher stated that they were supporting the continued access for the school, not supporting the whole proposal.

A resident stated that if Kelburne have been talking to the Council since 2015 about this, why have Kelburne not been present in the community?

A resident highlighted that all charities have a specific purpose, however in this case the two aspects of community and hockey will come into conflict, undermining that purpose. The resident stated that the facility needs to stay in the control of the community.

The owner of the Corner Shop and local resident said that she sees all the kids who play in the pitches come into the shop afterwards. Any transfer would have a big impact on her business and of the café.

A resident who is a member of Kelburne Cricket Club praised the success of the Hockey club. However, highlighted that when they previously considered moving back to Whitehaugh, they were only interested in hockey and didn't consider the needs of others. The resident also highlighted that Kelburne Cricket club had not been advised of this proposal, only heard about it through the Community Council. They went onto highlight that the bar is a key source of income, where the associate members support the club, so also surprised that this isn't included in phase 1.

A resident praised the work of Ralston Skills, and stated that an organisation like this should be nurtured and supported.

A resident questioned that since the Council had approached Kelburne about this, then we need to hold the Council accountable.

- ➔ Cllr Adam-McGregor stated that the first she was aware of this proposal was when the funding for the feasibility study went through Board.
- ➔ Cllr Sharkey is concerned with issues of democracy, particularly since Kelburne wish to get the CAT through before the election next year.
- ➔ Gavin Newlands (MP) highlighted that voices need to be listened to in the community, so talk to your Elected Members and to the Community Council.
- ➔ Cllr Graham went to press regarding this issue, since he wanted to make sure people were aware of the proposal.

At the end of the meeting residents were asked for a show of hands for and against Kelburne's proposal. Those present were strongly against the proposal.