



## Watford Borough Council

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Mr Hamilton

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your reference:  
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date: 26 February 2013  
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Dear Sir

**Internal Review of Freedom of Information Request - Fees paid to Lambert Smith Hampton Ltd for advisory role regarding allotment developments**

Thank you for your e-mail of the 22 February 2013 addressed to Mrs Robson requesting an internal review of her response to your Freedom of Information Act request of the 26 January 2013.

As you have requested a review I have considered your request that you consider you were not given a proper response to your request 'what was the advice given by LSH as regards developments on allotment land?'

I would advise you that LSH has given the Council no information to give you. You refer to minutes of a meeting where LSH were present on 14 June 2012. I would advise that this was a meeting between the council and Hertfordshire County Council for the purpose of discussing a number of sites identified by the County Council as potential for use for schools. LSH were present at that meeting as advisor not to Watford Council but to the County Council.

The notes of the meeting were redacted in response to the request by Mr Wesley, for which we have not been asked for a review as his specific question related to allotment land, as in fact did your original question. The meeting covered a number of sites that were not allotment land and therefore were not relevant to his question.

I am treating your request to view the minutes of meeting held on the 14 June 2012 and 25 September 2012 as new Freedom of Information Act requests and herewith enclose those meeting notes unredacted save for the names of the LSH representative and Hertfordshire County Council Officers present. These have been redacted as this is personal information relating to a third party and I see no public interest reason to disclose them.

If you are unhappy with my response to your request for a review you may complain to the Information Commissioner, in relation to your request for further information if you are unhappy with my response you may ask for an internal review and the matter will be considered by a different officer. In the event that you are still unhappy you may complain to the Information Commissioner.

Yours faithfully

**Carol Chen**

**Carol Chen**  
**Head of Legal & Property Services**

**Watford Schools**  
**14 June 2012**

<b>Present:-</b>	Manny Lewis	)	
	Jane Custance	)	
	Alistair Burg	)	WBC
	Eoin Hill	)	
	Ayesha Malik	)	
	[REDACTED]	)	LSH
	[REDACTED]	)	
	[REDACTED]	)	
	[REDACTED]	)	HCC
	[REDACTED]	)	
	[REDACTED]	)	

		Action
1.	[REDACTED] provided an update on Free Schools in Hertfordshire. The Free School in Hatfield is on track to open and is oversubscribed. The commissioning company will now bring forward 3 more proposals – Ascot Road and Lanchester House in Watford and a further site in Hemel Hempstead. Simon offered to explore WBC engagement with free schools company.	SN
2.	Discussions are taking pace between HCC, free school provider and West Herts College on how to move forward with Lanchester House. The College are taking an interest in delivering the school. HCC hope to have a proposal by Christmas. They are not launching Ascot Road yet as they need more certainty over delivery.	
3.	HCC hope that it will take a maximum of a year to fit out Lanchester House. DfE haven't published a timetable for bids yet. It would be possible for the school to open elsewhere and then transfer to Lanchester House when it's ready. Early engagement with ward members is important.	
	<u>Action</u> HCC	HCC
4.	Issues for planning are the provision of an external play area to the front of the building. Careful consideration needs to be given to fencing etc. Concerns also raised regarding parking. The planning application for the new college showed 19 spaces to be retained for use in connection with Lanchester House. HCC hope to use Cassiobury Park for detached playing fields. There have been initial discussions with Paul Rabbits on joint use and maintenance contributions. These need to be progressed.	JC
	<u>Action</u> HCC	HCC
5.	Free schools would be academies. No standards apply to free schools in terms of playing field provision.	
6.	<b>Health Campus</b> WBC is taking a report to Cabinet on 18 June seeking approval for formal engagement with the Irish Club regarding the surrender of their lease. Initial discussions with the Club have been positive and they are looking to relocate by August 2013.	
7.	Good progress has been made on this site in conjunction with WHC team. HCC are investigating the possibility of a 3 fe school on the Irish Club site. Detailed issues requiring investigation are flood plain, overhead cables and highways.	
8.	Ayesha advised that the Health Campus team intend to submit an application for the road and bridge early next year. A hybrid application for the rest of the site will follow.	

9.	Agreed that the best way forward was a separate application for the school to be submitted by HCC. Will need to deal with potential loss of public open space. Also concerns about traffic generation. Current access to the Irish Club is via Wiggshall Road. Unclear whether access via the new Health Campus road will be possible.	
10.	HCC anticipate making an application for funding in Summer 2013. Application by Christmas 2013. Opening 2015.	
11.	<u>Actions:</u> HCC to obtain highways advice and further detailed feasibility testing for the school.  HCC and WBC to review Health Campus s.106 provision for school given new school proposal.	PT  AM/JC/HCC
12.	<b>Ascot Road</b> A revised Centros masterplan for the site plan was provided. HCC provided clarification on the size of site required for the school. A minimum site of 0.7ha has been shown on current masterplan drawings. HCC will need to test whether a school can actually fit on the area of land shown on the plans, but they are likely to ideally need a 0.9ha site.	
13.	It was agreed that the scheme needs to be treated as a private sector scheme where the school site needs to be bought either through Free Schools grant allocation or HCC capital programme. An assessment of value would be based on D1 use.	EH & LSH
14.	Design work for the lozenge site would commence later this year. The multi storey car park could potentially go either on the lozenge site or parallel to the railway on the Ascot Road site. Depending on car parking design / layout about 1/3 of the lozenge site could be surplus to requirements and this could be rolled into the school site via a land swap arrangement. Subject to the proper agreement, this land could transfer to the school site at nil cost and this would potentially give the school the extra 0.2ha required.	
15.	An Application for funding to be made this Christmas. September 2014 opening. Centros are keen to submit a planning application for the school site ASAP.	
16.	<u>Actions:</u> Joint meeting with HCC and Centros to be arranged to discuss school proposals with Centros in detail.	EH
17.	<b>Orchard</b> This school is being expanded from 1fe to 2fe. The temporary expansion can be achieved on the existing site – however, they would require some of the adjacent unused allotment land to facilitate a permanent expansion.	
18.	HCC have done some initial feasibility work. Not all of the fallow allotment land would be needed – only about ¼ to a ½. HCC haven't tested whether the school could be expanded to 3fe. HCC will now examine this. Highways may be an issue. Preliminary discussions have been had with Paul Rabbits. <u>Action:</u> HCC	HCC
19.	WBC have report going to June Cabinet seeking approval of establishment of allotment stakeholder panel and a further review of the allotment strategy. The strategy is to rationalise allotment provision and use any capital receipt to invest in allotments across the town.	
20.	Release of the allotment would require an application to the Secretary of State. This would take about 12 – 18 months to be dealt with.	

21.	Formal consultation on the school expansion starts on Tuesday 19 <sup>th</sup> .	
22.	<b>BECC</b> HCC are reluctant to release the site while there is still the prospect of needing it for school use.	
23.	At this point in time, there is an acute need for primary school places in Watford. This is as a result of increasing births, but also because of large numbers of school age children moving into Watford.	
24.	HCC are under a contractual requirement to WBC to sell the BECC site for 'Best Consideration'.	
25.	HCC have told bidders that the decision to dispose the site is currently under review. The delay may result in the need for re-procurement if the site is to be released in future for housing.	
26.	HCC may decide to hold the site for 12-18 months to enable the feasibility of expanding Orchard school to 3 fe to be explored and as a contingency site.	
27.	WBC do not want to lose the capital receipt for the disposal of the BECC to accommodate TRDC's primary school requirements. HCC are looking to provide for this at Woodside.	
28.	HCC/WBC to look at existing agreement. WBC don't want to bear 50% of holding costs.	
29.	HCC investigating whether it would make financial sense to demolish the existing building.	
30.	<u>Actions:</u> WBC/HCC to engage over the use of allotment land following the Cabinet decision. HCC to investigate the feasibility of expanding Orchard School to 3 fe WBC/HCC to look at terms of contract regarding the sale of the BECC and the delay in disposal. HCC to investigate demolition of BECC	AB/DB
31.	<b>Date of next meeting</b> Agreed to meet again in September.	

**Watford Schools**  
**25 September 2012**

**Present:-**

Manny Lewis	)	
Jane Custance	)	
Anne Collins	)	WBC
Eoin Hill	)	
Ayesha Malik	)	
Catriona Ramsay	)	
[REDACTED]	)	LSH
[REDACTED]	)	
[REDACTED]	)	HCC
[REDACTED]	)	

**Apologies:-** [REDACTED] Alistair Burg

	<b>Health Campus (Irish Club site)</b>	<b>Action</b>
1.	Note produced by Stomer's on three key issues.	
2.	PT advised that Vincent and Goring have produced an interim report on these issues: highways/flood risk/ overhead cables.	
3.	<b>Flood</b> - Plan has been produced showing 1:50 flood zone. Mitigation measures proposed by Watford Health Campus (WHC) would alter Flood Zone 3B.	
4.	Kier have been selected as the preferred private sector partner for WHC. We are moving to financial close by the end of the calendar year.	
5.	WHC are discussing flood alleviation/mitigation with the Environment Agency. The bridge and access road will be provided in one of the first phases. EA are happy with the flood modelling carried out thus far. Discussions with the EA will include the issue of how the flood plain can be re-modelled to allow the school to go ahead.	
6.	KL advised that the pre-existing school age population generates a requirement for a 2FE school. The WHC proposals themselves will generate a further requirement for 1FE. Not clear whether 3FE can be accommodated on the site.	
7.	<b>Overhead Lines</b> – National Grid have guidelines and have provided advice. Buildings have to be a certain distance from the cables. The plan of the school is being revised to show the position of the swing lines. The building may need to be moved to meet NG requirements. Overall the power lines seem to be the least difficult issue to deal with. It is a design and siting issue to be resolved.	
8.	KL confirmed that premises rules have been relaxed. There are no set building or site sizes for free schools. The Government are looking at re-providing guidance but this is still awaited.	
9.	<b>Highways</b> – There are 3 different designs and locations for the link road. The precise route of the road needs to be determined before options for access to the school can be finalised.	
10.	Current plans show parking to maximum standards. As proposals are worked up the number of parking spaces is likely to reduce.	
11.	HCC would still hope for opening in Sept 2015.	
	<b>Ascot Road</b>	
12.	Planning application for school is under consideration. Rough Heads of Terms have been agreed.	

13.	There is a difference of opinion between HCC and Centros regarding site costs. It is possible for HCC to use CPO powers to acquire the site. This would be a safety measure. Report going to HCC Cabinet 29-10-12 to gain agreement for this approach.	
14.	They are discussing possible land swap of the lozenge site – but because of the CRL timing is uncertain.	
15.	Current thinking is that the site would be delivered in an “oven ready” condition by Centros, with school delivery via the free school company. The school site has a value of approx. £1mil. Some of the site construction costs could be borne by bid to EFA. HCC need to agree what could go in the application for funding. They are still waiting for information from Centros.	
16.	Decision on EFA funding anticipated August 2013. HCC can use their capital programme to buy the site, but there is no HCC funding for site works.	
17.	Plan to open the school in September 2014. It would probably open in temporary accommodation on another site. Ascot Road would be delivered in 2015. Bid formulation is underway for submission in December. They have engagement with a local school and West Herts College.	
18.	Planning application and land deal are likely to go to DC Committee and Cabinet approval in November.	
19.	HCC would require the use of KGV Playing Fields as a detached playing fields for the school. Should be straightforward. Discussions ongoing with Paul Rabbits. Will require the school to pay for lining etc.	
	<b>Orchard</b>	
20.	WBC has introduced the idea of using fallow allotment land at Callowland to expand Orchard School to allotment holders via Allotment Panel.	
21.	Anticipate decision on whether to progress this in December.	
22.	In principal the site could accommodate a larger school. HCC doing some feasibility work on this. There are two options: either to expand the existing school; or provide a completely new school. At this stage nothing has been discussed with the school. Currently only looking at 2FE school.	
23.	A 3FE school may be feasible from a highways perspective. HCC to provide further feedback at next meeting.	
24.	PT flagged up the potential for an application for Village Green status. ML advised that CPO powers would overcome this.	
	<b>Lanchester House</b>	
25.	Negotiations have stalled on the issue of car parking. WHC use the spaces envisaged for LH use for visitor parking. They are not prepared to surrender this piece of land. This means that HCC have had to go back to the drawing board.	
26.	HCC queried whether staff or visitor parking could be accommodated in The Avenue. WBC prepared to consider this. Up to 12 spaces may be involved.	
27.	CPO of LH is an option.	
28.	HCC are also looking at the possibility of parking at Little Cassiobury.	
29.	Sian FM has provided comments on proposed layout.	

	<b>BECC</b>	
30.	Demolition of existing building in hand. Going through a procurement process. Should take 5 months max.	
31.	HCC need to submit an application for Prior Approval.	
32.	HCC to provide invoices regarding site costs to AC.	PT
33.	Bidders have been informed that the site is on hold.	
	<b>Three Rivers</b>	
34.	Consulted on site allocations. There are 3 potential sites for a primary school: Croxley Green (Baldwin's Lane); Mill End and Maple Cross.	
35.	They have not allocated a primary school site in Abbots Langley. EiP anticipated in early 2013. HCC may make representations.	
36.	There is a free school agreement for a 4FE Secondary school by Reach Learning. They are looking for a site in the Maple Cross area. This is outside of HCC processes. They hope to open in September 2013.	
	<b>Expansions</b>	
37.	St Anthony's out for consultation Westfield College also consulting – this is not an HCC scheme Cherry Tree under construction Beechfield about to start Cassiobury nearly complete Holywell nearly complete	
38.	Laurence Haines temporarily expanded from 2 to 3 FE for a temporary period of 2 – 3 years. The site is restricted in terms of highways and other site restrictions. Permanent expansion not planned.	
	<b>AOB – Date of Next Meeting</b>	
	Next 6 months likely to be critical. Further meeting to be arranged for January 2013.	

Circulation: Those at the meeting plus Paul Rabbits, Kathryn Robson, David Noble and Andrew Gibson