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Please reply to:  
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Essex, CM9 6JQ  
Tel: 01621 856297  
Email: helphil@talktalk.net

Drapers Farm Sports Club,  
Drapers Chase,  
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Tel: 01621 852152

**dfsc**

Planning Department,  
Maldon District Council,  
Princes Road,  
MALDON,  
Essex CM9 5DL

11 October 2013

Dear Sirs,

**Re: Public Consultation Questionnaire**

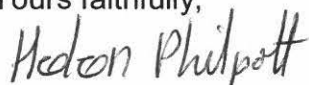
Although it is appreciated that the District Council has to provide additional residential properties within the District, members of the Drapers Farm Sports Club are very concerned about the lack of sport provision within Maldon and Heybridge. An increase in housing development, increasing the population, will mean that additional sporting facilities are required and the local plan, although referring to new green spaces, does not make any reference to sporting provision.

At the present time there is insufficient sporting provision within Maldon and Heybridge as experienced at Drapers Farm Sports Club. Maldon Cricket Club now has a membership of 300 plus including 200 colts and 30 female players and Maldon Rugby Football Club has a membership of over 350 and now with the newly formed Maldon Croquet Club using the facilities they are being stretched even further. There are continual problems with regard to conflicting operational and car parking difficulties and additional sporting provision is desperately required.

Details of the issues facing Maldon Rugby Football and the Cricket Club at Drapers Farm were contained in a letter dated 13th February 2012 addressed to the Senior Development Control Officer and for convenience a copy is now enclosed.

We urge the District Council to consider the provision of additional sports provision in the plans for the future of the District.

Yours faithfully,



Helen Philpott  
Hon Secretary



**Maldon Rugby Football Club and Maldon Cricket Club  
Drapers Farm, Heybridge**

Mr David Wallis  
Senior Development Control Officer  
Maldon District Council

Cc: Mr Peter Garrett  
Countryside, Coast & Leisure Team Leader  
Maldon District Council

13 February 2012

*Attachment: Outline plan*

Dear Mr Wallis

**Maldon Rugby Football Club and Maldon Cricket Club  
Outline Plan to develop land at/adjacent to Drapers Farm, Heybridge**

The purpose of this letter is to provide an update on the progress and growth of Maldon Rugby Football Club ("MRFC") and Maldon Cricket Club ("MCC"), to summarise the issues faced by each club caused by the constraints of the Clubs' existing facilities at Drapers Farm and to outline our thinking about the potential development of these facilities.

This follows our meeting (Jeremy Wood/Gareth Thomas) with Peter Garrett at your offices on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2011.

MRFC and MCC share playing and clubhouse facilities with each other and with Maldon Croquet Club, overseen by the Drapers Farm Management Committee (of which Councillor Bryan Harker is President). The plans outlined herein have been prepared by MRFC and MCC, with input from Vaun Legerton, Chairman of Maldon Croquet Club, and discussed with the Drapers Farm Management Committee, receiving their in-principle support.

We are aware of the possible relocation by Heybridge Swifts Football Club to land close to Drapers Farm and also a desire of the local Scout Troup to build a HQ in the Drapers Farm car park. Maldon Table Tennis Club also has playing facilities in a hut located in this car park.

MRFC and MCC are active members of the local community and our objective is to work closely with Maldon District Council and the other interested parties to develop an integrated plan that addresses the needs of all concerned in developing excellent, well coordinated sports and leisure facilities for Maldon.

## Update on recent progress made by MRFC and MCC

### **Maldon RFC**

MRFC is an inclusive club that offers rugby in a safe and caring environment to players ranging from age 5 through to veterans. We adopt a “rugby for all” philosophy, encouraging new members of all levels of ability and experience and receive excellent support from parents and other volunteers.

In recent years we have made concerted efforts to develop the Club – in particular the Mini & Youth Section, which provides coaching and matches to children aged from 5 to 15 every Sunday morning from September to April. These efforts have included:

- Working closely with 17 local primary schools to introduce children (girls and boys) to the game through an annual inter-schools tournament;
- Supporting schools by providing regular coaching to children either in their PE lessons or after school clubs;
- Undertaking an extensive programme of training for our Mini & Youth coaches (all unpaid volunteers) – this programme was partly funded by a grant from Sport England;
- Securing the Rugby Football Union’s Seal of Approval – this was a land mark achievement that ensures that we meet RFU best practice in offering children and adults a high quality rugby experience in a safe and well run environment.

In addition, we have repeatedly mobilised large numbers of volunteers to improve the physical environment at the Club – for example clearing overgrown areas to provide additional parking – and have used a combination of Club funds and RFU grants to undertake essential upgrades to unreliable equipment such as the boiler and showers.

These efforts have been successful in sustaining and growing the Club and we have increased our membership very substantially to today’s levels of:

- 259 playing members aged 5 to 15 (an increase from 160 two years ago)
- 100 playing members aged 16+
- 134 Vice Presidents plus many more social members/visitors

The imperatives for our further development are now to:

- Continue to attract and retain players in the 5 to 12 age range
- Attract new players and overcome retention issues in the 14 to 16 age range

We plan to address these imperatives by:

- Further improving the rugby experience of all players at the Club through ongoing enhancements to our facilities;
- Developing new links with secondary schools in the area and provide coaching support to these schools.

However, our ability to maintain the existing playing membership – let alone to continue to grow – faces severe difficulties caused by the physical constraints of Drapers Farm, as outlined below.

### **Maldon Cricket Club**

MCC is a family-orientated club that encourages male and female players of all ages to play cricket in a pleasant, friendly and supportive environment.

We attract players from ages 6 upwards and are very proud of our record of introducing new players to the game and in developing children through our Colts Section and into our Adult teams.

While our philosophy focuses on participation, sportsmanship and enjoyment, we compete at a good level and provide high quality coaching aimed at developing excellence amongst our more talented and ambitious players – particularly in the Colts Section.

Similar to MRFC, MCC is enjoying a sustained period of growth and development in both our Adult and Colts Sections. Supporting this growth, we have made considerable improvements to our coaching and to our playing and training facilities:

- For the past 26 years we have run cricket taster evenings each Friday through the summer for local children aged 6 to 11. These highly enjoyable and successful evenings regularly attract 150+ children – those who are interested in taking up the game then typically progress into our Colts' team squads.
- We believe that the quality of coaching offered to children is a key determinant of the enjoyment and fulfilment that they derive from the game. While all of our coaches are volunteers, we have invested heavily in having them trained into one of the most highly qualified coaching teams in the area. The success of this initiative is seen in the growing Colts Section, the numbers of colts graduating to the Adult teams and playing at representative level.
- The commitment of our players and coaches is excellent and we are very pleased to provide indoor training to children and adults throughout the winter months.
- Supported by the hard work of our members and grants by various bodies including Sport England, we have improved the physical infrastructure of our club – for example building high quality nets in a secure compound at Drapers Farm. Together with Maldon District Council we have also greatly improved the cricket square at Drapers Farm to a standard to be proud of.

MCC now boasts a membership of 300+ - including over 200 colts and 30 female players. Last season we ran 5 Mens teams, 1 Ladies team and 10 Colts teams across U9, 11, 13 and 15 level. In 2012 we plan to run 1 additional Mens team and 1 additional Ladies team.

While we are enormously grateful for the support of MDC in maintaining and improving our Drapers Farm facilities, we are now at a point where the physical constraints are severely hindering the continuing development of the Club.

## **Key issues currently faced by the clubs at Drapers Farm**

### **1. Maldon Rugby Club**

#### ***Inadequate playing area for Mini & Youth to train and play matches***

In short, MRFC – specifically the Mini & Youth Section – has outgrown its current facilities, causing repeated and frequent operational difficulties.

The main rugby season runs from the beginning of September until the end of April. Every Sunday morning during the season (except the approx 10 days on which we have away fixtures and 2 Sundays over Christmas) the Club provides training/matches for 259+ children spread over 10 age groups. On approx 15 of these days we entertain other clubs with similar numbers of teams and children.

Despite very careful management of the playing area, we simply do not have enough space to accommodate so many children. The effect is that:

- The quality of the rugby experience we can offer to the children is compromised;
- We cannot offer Sunday morning training to the older youth teams, which is exacerbating the retention problems we face in these age groups;
- We are unable to encourage more children to play;
- There is intolerable pressure on the playing surface that affects not only the Rugby Club but also the Cricket and Croquet Clubs.

This problem is recognised by the RFU who support our ongoing efforts to develop the Club and who would be willing to provide some financial support to increase the playing area, providing we can demonstrate adequate access rights over any new land.

### **2. Maldon Cricket Club**

#### ***Ongoing problems with damage to outfield at Drapers Farm over the winter***

The constraints of the current MCC/MRFC playing area are such that it is impossible to avoid having the rugby Mini & Youth Section train and play matches on the outfield of the cricket pitch. Inevitably this causes enormous damage to the playing surface that:

- Requires costly remedial work every spring;
- Even after this work results in a very uneven and potentially dangerous outfield;
- Is to the substantial detriment of the great improvements made to the square.

#### ***Number of cricket pitches and location of MCC's current second pitch at Promenade Park***

In order to satisfy the demands of the growing numbers of playing men, women and children, we need to run extra teams. While we have become extremely adept at maximising the use of our existing facilities, we cannot accommodate the extra teams using only two pitches – we desperately need a third.

With regard to our existing pitches, while there are ongoing problems with the state of the outfield, we are very pleased with the improvements made to the wicket at Drapers Farm. However, the location and standard of our second pitch, at Promenade Park, is problematic.

Once again, we are pleased with the efforts made to improve the facilities at the Prom (through the provision of a container that provides storage and a place to make teas). However, the reality is that it will require considerable investment to raise the standard of the wicket to a level suitable for anything beyond junior Colts cricket.

Perhaps more importantly, the Prom is so distant from Drapers that it is impossible to provide for the social dimension of the game through players and spectators visiting the clubhouse during and after fixtures – hence the Club is effectively split into two on match days.

For example, this factor has dissuaded us from playing some of the ladies' matches on a Friday evening, to coincide with the children's taster evenings being held at Drapers farm – it doesn't work to have the children at one site and their mothers at another.

### **3. Maldon Croquet Club**

#### ***Pressure on space leading to damage to Croquet area***

The Croquet Club, which itself is growing in membership, uses an area of the cricket pitch behind the square. Despite our best efforts, the pressure on space is such that it has been impossible to prevent damage to this part of the playing area during the rugby season.

Vaun Legerton, Chairman of Maldon Croquet, is a member of Drapers Farm Management Committee and supports the outline proposals presented herein which would prevent damage to the croquet area during the winter months.

### **4. Issues Common to the Rugby & Cricket Clubs**

#### ***Inadequate car parking capacity***

The Drapers Farm car park is in a bad state of disrepair and, more critically, is way too small for our needs. This is felt particularly acutely on:

- Sunday mornings through the rugby season – particularly on match days, when we need to accommodate 259 players and their parents from our own club plus similar numbers from visiting clubs;
- Friday evenings throughout the summer – when MCC provides cricket to approximately 150+ local children;
- Special event days held by MRFC and MCC – such as Cricket Week, the annual Schools Rugby Festival, the Veterans Rugby Tournament and various charity events held by both clubs.

We often use the additional car parking adjacent to Heybridge Swifts' ground, but this is also inadequate in its size and sub-optimal in that parents, members and visitors who park there tend not to visit the clubhouse after games. This adversely affects the health of both clubs in terms of the social dimension and takings behind the bar – a key source of revenues.

Consequently we regularly need to park cars on the main playing area. While we do this in as controlled a manner as possible, inevitably it causes considerable damage to the surface – particularly through the wet winter months.

### ***Insufficient space in the Clubhouse***

MRFC and MCC believe strongly in the importance of the social aspect of children and adults participating in or watching sport and we work hard to encourage our own players/parents and those of visiting clubs to visit the clubhouse after games. For example, after all Mini and Youth rugby matches we provide a freshly cooked, wholesome meal to the players.

We also frequently host special events that are attended by our own members and the local community.

The Clubs are fortunate to have an attractive clubhouse and we have worked hard to improve the basic infrastructure – for example by replacing the boiler and showers and building changing facilities for referees.

However, on every Sunday morning through the rugby season and at each of the special events, we find that the space in the clubhouse is inadequate. This severely constrains the events we can hold and deters people from using the clubhouse and hence affects revenues. In brief:

- The useable floor area is too small;
- The kitchen takes up a large part of the main circulation area and faces “the wrong way”, reducing the useable area and making serving food difficult and cumbersome;
- The absence of a covered porch leads to Mini & Youth players struggling to find somewhere to remove their boots – and consequently large amounts of mud being brought into the building.

### Discussions with David French

David French owns the land adjacent to the Club car park and to the far side of Drapers Chase. David is a former player with MRFC and continues to visit the clubhouse regularly on a social basis. We have a good dialogue with him and he has repeatedly stated his willingness to use his land to enable MRFC to increase its playing area.

Over several years we have discussed with him the use of the area of his land adjacent to the Club car park to provide a further area for training by the Mini & Youth Section (this is the triangular shaped area labelled "4" on the attached plan).

Using this land for Mini & Youth training/matches would reduce the pressure on the playing area on a Sunday morning and hence reduce the damage done to the cricket outfield through the winter.

This land is currently laid to rough grass and the work involved to make it playable would be manageable. Our discussions with the RFU confirm that they would support the use of this land for training and may be able to provide some funding for its development, providing we are able to demonstrate security of access to it.

We understand from you that the use of this land for rugby would require change of use planning consent. While David remains amenable to our playing on the land, he is reluctant to pursue planning permission until the bigger picture regarding the Heybridge Swifts relocation becomes clearer.

We have also discussed with David the possibility of using the land for temporary car parking on up to 28 days through the year. This would be of huge assistance on match and event days and would benefit the residents of Drapers Chase in reducing congestion on those days.

David is open to this idea, but he is concerned about making even temporary changes to the use of any of his land while the larger project remains under discussion, just in case the attitude of local residents is affected. Given the beneficial effect of reduced congestion on Drapers Chase we wonder whether MDC have any thoughts as to how the idea of improved temporary parking might be encouraged.

## **MRFC & MCC Outline proposals for development of Drapers Farm (see plan attached)**

We believe that the following would represent reasonable steps to address the issues outlined above. These proposals are consistent with our understanding of the requirements of Heybridge Swifts FC and could also accommodate the needs of Maldon Croquet Club, Maldon Table Tennis Club and the Scouts.

Importantly, we also believe that they would improve the situation for the residents on Drapers Chase by reducing the traffic on this road and by providing scope for planting on the far side of Drapers Chase to overcome any concerns about the visual impact of the development.

### **1. Create a new cricket square/pitch on the current rugby pitches**

A key objective of MCC is to have three pitches.

It is proposed that the existing pitch outside the clubhouse be retained as our 1<sup>st</sup> Team pitch and that the land currently occupied by the 1st and 2nd Team rugby pitches be redeveloped to provide a second cricket pitch. We propose to retain Promenade Park as our third pitch.

The Croquet Club could either continue to operate behind the square on the existing cricket pitch or, as proposed by Vaun Legerton, move its playing area to the edge of the new cricket pitch, as shown on the attached plan. In either case, the current concerns about damage to this area during the rugby season would be overcome.

### **2. Create new rugby pitches and a training area on the land to the east of Drapers Chase**

To create room for the provision of the new cricket pitch and to obviate the need for our Mini & Youth Section to use the cricket outfield, it is proposed to move the rugby playing area to the land (currently used for agriculture) to the east of Drapers Chase. Here we would like to establish three pitches and a training area.

Ideally the 1<sup>st</sup> team pitch would have floodlights to allow evening fixtures. The proposed location of the training area would require that the social housing shown on the plan be moved – presumably to the main proposed housing development in the North West corner of the plan.

### **3. Extend the car park onto the land to the east of the existing car park**

This proposal would require an access bridge over the drainage ditch.

### **4. Create a new access road**

In order to reduce traffic on Drapers Chase it is proposed that a new access road be built from the beginning of Drapers Chase to the car park, running parallel to the existing road but on the far side of the drainage ditch.

## 5. Retain the existing clubhouse but increase the useable area

Numerous improvements could be made to increase the useable floor space:

- i. Construct a covered porch along the front of the clubhouse;
- ii. Move the kitchen area into an extension at the rear of the clubhouse;
- iii. Fill in the remaining area at the rear of the clubhouse (currently used for parking) with a conservatory to house an eating area;
- iv. Build a mezzanine floor (with internal open balcony) above the area in front of the bar;
- v. Extend the changing rooms into a first floor extension and with an external balcony facing the cricket pitch.

We are very excited at what we see as a landmark opportunity to develop Maldon's sports and leisure facilities and look forward to a positive discussion with Maldon District Council and the other parties concerned.

Yours sincerely

**Gareth Thomas**

Chairman of Development, MRFC  
Colts Management Team, MCC

**Alan Coker**

Chairman  
Maldon Cricket Club

**Jeremy Wood**

Chairman  
Maldon Rugby Football Club

**Colin Philpott, MBE**

Drapers Farm Management Committee