

**‘The Community Use of School
Facilities at the AVENUE’
Discussion Paper
Community and Education Work Stream 2014**

**Lee Hickin – Assistant Director – Leisure
NEDDC Leisure Services**

Introduction

NEDDC Leisure Services interest in the Avenue project centres largely around the potential for the school/community facilities planned for the site along with the connectivity of the site via the network of multi-user trails around the development which is being progressed via a further group or the 'Connectivity' workstream.

NEDDC Leisure Services play a key role in meeting the Council's strategic corporate objective to "**improve peoples health**", with particular emphasis on supporting ambitions in sport and physical activity, health improvement, social inclusion, regeneration and community safety.

It is well documented how physical activity improves overall health, fitness and wellbeing levels, however what is probably not as well known is the impact of '*physical inactivity*'.

- Physical inactivity is said to be the fourth leading cause of death worldwide.
- In the uk it is reported that 17% of deaths are caused by inactivity.
- Only 30% of us are deemed active enough for our health.
- Medical experts have said that getting people who are inactive – active has the greatest single impact in terms of intervention in people's health.
- Physical activity helps tackle the root cause of many conditions including;
 - Diabetes
 - Cardio vascular disease
 - Dementia
 - Depression and anxiety
 - Arthritis and many more
- It is reported that physical activity increases bone density in teenagers which last all of their life.
- Physical activity can increase the strength and thickness of cartilage and prevent deterioration of the joints.
- Physical activity is said to reduce depression by 30% and dementia by 40%.

When coupled with other lifestyle and socio-economic issues, the effects of physical inactivity can become compounded and an individual's overall health and wellbeing can be affected to an even greater extent.

North East Derbyshire;

- Has a profile of people's health that is varied compared with the England average.

- Has a deprivation level that is lower than average, however there are pockets of high multiple deprivation particularly in the south of the District.
- Has approximately 15.4% (2,500) children live in poverty. Life expectancy for both men and women is similar to the England average.
- Has a life expectancy that is 11.5 years lower for men and 5.9 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of North East Derbyshire than in the least deprived areas.
- Has 15.2% of children in Year 6 that are classified as obese.
- Has 24.9% of adults that are classified as obese.
- Has only 23.8% of adults participating in 3 x 30 minutes of physical activity per week. The 3 x 30 minutes East Midlands average is 24.5% and the national average is 24.7%.
- Has a greater % of **least active demographic segments** in the district than either County, Regional or National levels. This segment equates to **41%** of our adult population in comparison with **37.4%** of the National population.

The importance of physical activity, as mentioned previously, is well known and understood, yet people remain inactive for any number of reasons. Behavioural change is difficult to achieve, however the removal of barriers to participation and creating greater accessible opportunities to engage in physical activity will make this behavioural change process much easier.

At the avenue and developments like it, there is an opportunity at the outset to 'design in' physical activity into people's lives by creating what are becoming known as 'active communities' which might include;

- An effective school programme which has integrated physical activity.
- Sustainable/alternative transport links via walking or cycling routes.
- Access to the right community facilities with sport and physical activity for all.

Effective Community Use

When planning the development of such facilities, a wider perspective of the area will help establish supply and demand, such a perspective will also help to ensure that the facility mix being proposed is both appropriate and needed.

Once developed, the community use of these facilities brings with it many benefits, it can encourage broader engagement from the local community, promote a greater commitment to the school and to education, while contributing to community cohesion and a sense of pride in the place where people live. The community use of school facilities can take many forms as the school can play host to sporting activities, health and fitness related activity, adult and community learning

programmes, arts and cultural activities such as dance, music, performance, film and theatre to name a few.

Along with these benefits, commercial lettings can of course provide schools with a useful source of additional income, promote safer neighbourhoods and prevent crime.

Controlling Issues Through Effective Management

At present there are many facilities including sports halls, pitches, swimming pools and performance space that are located within our schools, colleges and educational facilities that are difficult to access for a host of reasons including;

- No Community Use agreement or policy in place.
- High costs for users.
- 'Caretaker' approach to managing the facilities and bookings.
- Staffing difficulties out of school hours.
- Poor booking procedures.
- Poor design.

There are clearly a variety of ways that a school might choose to manage the community use of its facilities, these might include but would not be limited to 'in house' management by the school, local authority Leisure Services management arrangement, a facilities management company, a community trust or partnership to name a few. Whatever the arrangement, there has to be a clear understanding of what is to be achieved embedded in a policy document, business plan, service level agreement or other document to underpin it which might include but not be limited to the following;

- Facilities available for community use.
- Opening hours/days, after school, evenings, holiday times etc.
- Pricing policy.
- Metering arrangements
- Management charging formula (if managed separately to the school).
- Service specification which may include;
 - Security.
 - Cash handling and banking arrangements.
 - Stocks, supplies and stores including sharing of equipment arrangements with the school etc.
 - Bookings procedure.
 - Programming.
 - Complaints procedure.
 - Lost property arrangements.
 - Cleaning arrangements.
 - Defects, Breakdowns, Failures, Faults and Damage.
 - Redecoration, wear and tear.
 - Capital/revenue facilities/equipment replacement.

- Hire equipment and consumables.
- Vending.
- Storage areas.
- Staffing.
- Marketing and promotion.
- Licences.
- Waste disposal.
- Health and Safety arrangements including risk assessments, safe systems of work, Fire Safety, Legionella risk assessment, COSHH etc.
- Monitoring and Review.

Controlling Issues Through Effective Design

Along with good management, good facility design plays a very important part in the success of the community use of a school facility. Where the areas within the facility are in relation to each other is key when creating a facility that can adapt from one need/user group to another quickly and efficiently whilst affording the appropriate level of separation that may/may not be required. Building materials and finishes also play a major role with regard to appropriate use, ongoing management future maintenance requirements. Ideal flooring materials for instance will differ and vary depending on the type of activity, for such a community use provision, a 'best fit' approach will have to be employed. The following are an example of key areas for consideration with regard to the design of community use facilities;



- Effective signage and differentiation of design/colours etc can improve accessibility and help the user navigate the facility.
- Routes around the site, buildings and pitches that are fully accessible and well lit at night are vital for community use as most of this will be during evenings.
- The entrance needs to be obvious and welcoming for both children and adults.
- Separate entrances within the same area are ideal if community use will be during the school day also.

- This area would need to be designed so that it can create a controlled flow of users and provide a secure area to manage bookings, take cash and bank monies.



- Due to the likely minimal staffing during community use hours, it is important that the community use areas can be seen/observed as much as possible from the reception area by designing in effective sight lines.
- Combining as many elements for community use into a more confined area will be easier to manage and be a more efficient use of space, however effective programming will need to compliment this approach.
- Having a school hall that becomes a badminton court, a double table tennis area, a dance studio, a space for performance, a cinema and multi function area for instance would if managed correctly squeeze a massive ROI 'return of investment' and present excellent VFM 'value for money' from the initial investment in the school.

-



- The flexibility and dimensions of space/facilities increases the opportunities for a greater number of activities to be provided. The space will need to cater for school and community activities incorporating;
 - flush walls
 - moveable partitions
 - controllable lighting
 - controllable heating/cooling
 - blackout capability
 - multiple power sources
 - adequate storage for the multitude of activities equipment

- Buffer zones to create additional capacity if required for school/community sessions and changing rooms that share the same services with possibly different access etc need to be considered.
- Zoning and the ability to isolate parts of the school during community use needs to be built into the design, having community use happening in disjointed areas across the site will result in a lot of time being wasted in terms of site management and control will be greatly reduced.

The Community Use of the School Facilities at the Avenue

Whilst the eventual 'community use' of the school facilities at the Avenue will be likely to respond to the needs and the ideas of the community as it grows and develops, it is important at this stage to at least set out the possibilities of such community use to ensure that the facilities are designed with both the capacity and flexibility to effectively provide the social, recreational and educational opportunities that such a community might need.

The Programme

The following is what could become a 'balanced' programme of activities/ facilities offered as part of the 'community use' timetable;



- **Cycle Hire** – Adult and child, standard and recumbent cycle options including a niche KMX option (BMX/go cart hybrid). The facility is close to a whole network of multi user trails which can be used for recreational purposes and sustainable travel options to and from neighbouring settlements.
- **Child Care/ Crèche/ early years** – available during the day.
- **Cafe** – available during the day, possibly run by the school catering staff.
- **Changing/shower facilities** - for internal use and external pitch use.



- **Adult classroom space** - with interactive white board etc.
 - Computer courses
 - Art & craft
 - Languages
 - Jewellery making
 - Healthy eating / dietary courses
 - Music tuition



- **Sports hall** (18m x 10m x 6.1m high) with demountable stage
 - Badminton



- Short mat bowls
- Junior Gymnastics / children's 'tumble tots'
- Aerobics/fitness classes
- Martial Arts
- Yoga

- Playgroups
- Table tennis
- Short tennis
- Performances – music, theatre, dance
- Rural cinema
- Meetings
- Private functions
- Auctions
- Guides/scouts/cadets
- Disco's

The Facilities

In addition to the general community use design principles detailed earlier, there are some specifics that need to be considered also;

- Where the areas within the facility are in relation to each other is key, this facility needs to be able to adapt from one need/user group to another quickly and efficiently whilst affording the appropriate level of separation that may/may not be required.
- The facility will require illuminated routes around the site as most of the community use will be during evenings.



- The adult/child entrance/reception area in a school facility of this type and size ought to be juxtaposed to each other and be both obvious and welcoming for both children and adults.
- This area would allow both a natural but also a physical separation of school and community users.
- The reception desk will play host to both community and school needs, the area will incorporate a specific 'till and booking' system for the community use of the facilities, this will be complimented by two separate reception 'back offices' to provide a secure area to manage bookings, take cash, bank monies during community use hours/usage, without impacting on the day to day operation of the schools.



- The main hall/sports hall will be the heart of the community offer whilst being the nucleus of the school, this will be where the majority of community activities take place, whilst being the key location for whole school activities such as assemblies and lunch. The main hall will need to be 18m x 10m x 6.1m high in order to incorporate badminton or provide a stage and seating for 180 people for performances for example.



- Considering the potential programme and diverse range of uses, the main hall would need a considerable storage area (approx 40m²) with double doors to contain the many pieces of equipment to service all of the activities listed including;
 - Nets and posts for badminton
 - Nets and posts for short tennis
 - Mats and associated equipment for gymnastics
 - Two table tennis folding tables
 - Carpets for bowls
 - Stage units
 - Folding tables x 20
 - Adult/standard folding seating x 180
- In addition to the above, a separate area for school equipment will need to be provided.
- Toilets for both adults /disabled and children will share the same services and backup to each other, these will be located in the foyer area.
- Ideally the café would use the same infrastructure as the schools catering facilities – possibly being run by the school catering team during school hours, with the option to isolate certain areas being built in to the design out of school hours.



- The cycling facility could be operated from the reception desk in terms of booking and payment, the storage/minor repairs area for the cycles will however be likely to require an external area close by to the café, toilets and changing facilities.
- The adult classroom facility will be a room that can be used by the school during the day but with a quick furniture change becomes an adult learning facility at night.
- The crèche / child care facility is a specialist area in itself, the requirements for which will be recommended by others, however this area will need to be located in an area that can be both accessed and is also isolated from the school during the daytime.
- Following any period of use, cleaning of the facility ready for school use and vice versa will be required, a separate cleaning cupboard, equipment and cleaning supplies are recommended.
- Rather than having separate changing facilities for the outside pitches located away from the school hub, it will be a more efficient use of resources to combine those facilities with those of the school, or at least be proximate to each other. Both the installation and operating costs will be greatly reduced using this approach.
- Similarly, rather than providing a separate car park beside the pitches, it would make more sense and create a greater level of flexibility incorporating additional parking close to the school car park which would have the functionality of being able to be both 'zoned off' for community use and acting as a 'buffer' or 'overflow' area for the school when the need arose. This area would also need to be lit.

Potential Layout of School and Community Use Facilities at the Avenue

Key:

Shared use Community Use School Use

To Pitches

