

- **Highways issues arising:** Direct traffic flow from Castle Street and therefore favoured by Highways. Currently the road is only adopted as far as the northern gate (the Highland Gathering pedestrian entrance). We have discussed three options with Highland Council:
  - entry and egress through the northern gate
  - entry and egress through the southern gate
  - a one way traffic flow within the site, with entry through the northern gate and egress through the southern

Highways require entry and egress through the northern gate, and a plan of the required road layout is in Appendix E.

This at least avoids the cost of bringing the road up to adopted standard, which would be required if entry were by the present Highland Gathering vehicle entrance. That means room for two vehicles to pass, (lighting to adopted standard is already in place). Since road widening could not encroach on the curtilage of the houses opposite, the Meadows Park roadside Community Hedge will have to be relocated. Ownership of the road would have had to be confirmed and consent obtained if necessary; it is thought to be owned by Sutherland Estate and one other.

- **Development issues arising:** Two way road access within the site might require demolition of the existing Highland Gathering buildings on the plot boundary (one toilet, one store, and one combined store and catering facility) and these facilities would have to be replaced within the new building.
- Informal enquiry indicates no history of land contamination.
- High water table will demand specialist approach to foundations.

**Conclusion:** Capable of development depending on scope of the building:. Informal enquiry with the Planning Department suggests this site is less likely to be favoured by Planners than Option 2. Nevertheless this site is preferable for a Community Centre because it is close to the pedestrian entrance, when arrival on foot is encouraged in reference to generation of traffic. It is not in direct line of sight of the householders to the north, and shielded by trees to the west.

## **Option 2      Southern perimeter**

This site is located on the southern boundary, on rough ground which is not currently used by the Meadows Park Trustees. Its boundaries are less constrained than Option 1, and the old Highland Gathering viewing stand need not necessarily be demolished. If a new viewing stand were desired anyway as part of the Community Centre, the Gathering layout would need changing. That would not necessarily require reorientation of the football pitch because, despite the long-standing convention that the Games take place within the football playing area, the terrain is firm and level throughout the site.

The location is directly in line of sight of the houses to the north and would interrupt their view across the Dornoch Firth. Being materially further from the Meadows Park entrance, building here runs the risk of discouraging arrival on foot, and attracting more car movements.

- **Planning issues arising:** Informal consultation with the Planning Department suggests this could be the Planners' preferred site, because it is furthest from housing. Notwithstanding that, the location is directly in line of sight of the houses to the north and would interrupt their view across the Dornoch Firth. Being materially further from the Meadows Park entrance, building here runs the risk of discouraging arrival on foot, and attracting more car movements.
- **Highways issues arising:** Direct traffic flow from Castle Street and therefore favoured by Highways. Road access would be as described for Option 1.
- **Development issues arising:** Informal enquiry indicates no history of land contamination.
- High water table may demand specialist approach to foundations.
- We have also been told that the land here is made up with builders' rubble and topsoil. We have not verified the state of the soil, but it will be remembered that the site of the Dornoch Sports Hall has already had to be moved, because the original location had a similar issue with soil structure. If any preference emerges for the southern site, the soil conditions should be verified by a Consulting Engineer to make sure that the ground will support the required foundations.
- **Conclusion:** Should not be contemplated without clarifying soil conditions. Otherwise potentially capable of development. Perhaps likely to be favoured by Planners, and least likely to attract objections from neighbours.

### **Option 3 Northern perimeter**

This site is located immediately to the rear of houses on the northern boundary. The site is occupied by the Football Club buildings.

- **Planning issues arising:** Highly undesirable to Planners. Residential amenity objection because of housing immediately to the north.
  - **Highways issues arising:** Direct traffic flow from Castle Street and therefore favoured by Highways. Road access would be as described for Option 1.
- Development issues arising:** Informal enquiry indicates no history of land contamination. High water table may demand specialist approach to foundations.
- **Conclusion:** A bad neighbour development. Do not consider further.

#### **Option 4      On old Glebe Lands**

This site is situated to the south of the Meadows Nursing Home. It is also the site of proposed development by the Golf Club.

- **Planning issues arising:** Highly undesirable to Planners. Residential amenity consideration will be especially sensitive given the occupancy of the Nursing Home.
- **Highways issues arising:** The access road is only adopted as far as the northern boundary of the Nursing Home site. It would have to be upgraded to adopted standards. Less favoured than other sites because there is no direct traffic flow from Castle Street.
- **Development issues arising:** Informal enquiry indicates no history of land contamination.
- High water table may demand specialist approach to foundations.
- **Conclusion:** A bad neighbour development. Do not consider further.

Appendix E Junction layout required by Highland Council for vehicular access



## **Appendix F Sift of potential uses identified in public consultation**

A public consultation exercise was carried out to identify potential uses for the Community Centre. We have analysed the results and split them between:

- core uses
- uses appropriate to the Dornoch Sports Hall project, and therefore excluded from the Community Centre
- additional uses to be evaluated as individual options

### **F.1 Core uses**

We define core uses as:

- currently established usage of the Social Club, supported with up to date facilities
- other compatible uses requested in the public consultation, which would increase revenue streams but not have an undue impact on complexity of the building:

Such core uses comprise:

- meetings of local societies; conferences with break out rooms; meetings and training events for the Highland Council and other governmental organisations
- events, such as heritage exhibitions, craft fairs, antique fairs, sales of work, indoor boot fairs (as well as outdoors in the car park), charity auctions
- Highland Dancing for the Gathering in wet weather
- luncheon clubs
- child play groups
- adult education
- classes, such as Highland Dancing, Scottish Country Dancing, line dancing, Weight Watchers, Pilates, yoga, aerobics and art classes, dog training
- indoor bowls
- youth development, snooker / pool and table tennis
- private functions such as wedding receptions, birthday parties, dances, ceilidhs and discos
- film shows
- music performances
- amateur dramatics

### **F.2 Elimination of activities within the remit of the Dornoch Academy Sports Hall project**

The Sports Hall will be a “4 badminton court” development, designed to provide indoor sports facilities for both school and community. A review of the Tain Royal Academy Community Centre demonstrates that joint provision is practical. A key element in joint use during the day is segregated changing, and this will not be provided in the Dornoch Sports Hall, in practice most community use would be evenings, weekends and in the school holidays.

DADCA's initial public consultation identified interest in a number of uses which are not recommended for the proposed Community Centre, because provision will be made by the Sports Hall. These are:

- badminton
- indoor basketball
- climbing wall
- indoor archery
- indoor football
- indoor tennis
- swimming
- volleyball

### **F.3 Elimination of other activities**

#### ***Internet café***

A café and internet access have been suggested, and indeed internet cafés score well under some Government criteria for funding. A business case for a purpose built café would be difficult to justify, when Dornoch is already well supplied and there would be no passing trade. If successful it could also damage existing businesses in the town. However with careful design it should be possible to keep options open, and provide for good refreshment facilities without extra capital spend. A wi-fi hotspot is proposed in any event, since internet access which would be needed for the office, and a hotspot can be provided at no additional cost.

#### ***Activities beyond the capacity of DADCA to provide***

We eliminated from consideration those very large enterprises which are really the province of large sports centres, and have already been excluded from the Sports Hall. These are climbing wall and swimming.

#### ***Squash Club joint venture***

The Dornoch Squash Club has a single squash court close by Meadows Park but none of the other facilities normally associated with a viable club. This hinders development of the sport in Dornoch, for example in collaboration with the Academy.

It was proposed by DADCA that one squash court and associated ventilation plant could be added to the new building. This assumes changing and showering facilities would already be in place, but it might make an important contribution to the marginal revenue needed to justify them.

In return the Club would be invited to sell its existing property (once the new court was built) and pay the proceeds as match funding to cover the capital cost and endow the future running costs. It would be necessary for this to be backed by a legally binding agreement, by the time project finance was put in place.

Bearing in mind the critical scrutiny given to grant applications, our criteria for inclusion of a significant additional sporting facility would be:

- a clear commitment to participation from the club concerned
- clear demand for the facility evidenced by a strong existing user base, or a clearly defined strategy for developing the sport (and preferably both).

In the event, the Squash Club took the proposition to a General Meeting and elected not to participate.

### ***Fitness suite***

There were strong voices for a fitness suite in the earlier DADCA consultation. A Feasibility Study for a Sports Hall was conducted by Edinburgh University in 1999. It identified potential for 5,500 fitness suite visits a year. Since then the Tain Community Centre (TRACC) has been built. This currently attracts customers from Dornoch, and also from the catchment area of Bonar Bridge and Lairg included in the 1999 study as feeders for Dornoch. It is fair to assume that, if a fitness suite were provided in the Community Centre, Dornoch users of the TRACC and Golspie leisure centres could be retrieved. But one could not assume that users from the Bonar / Lairg hinterland would change their habit. A conversation with the Royal Dornoch Golf Club indicates no firm plan to install a fitness suite there, and anecdotal evidence suggests that fitness suites attached to golf clubs are lightly used.

The 1999 study was unable to make a case for a fitness suite in Dornoch, even before TRACC was opened. We find the case to be weaker now because of:

- increased competition and reduced geographical catchment area
- high capital cost of provision and uncertain revenue stream
- management risk and associated on-cost
  - requirement for specialist supervision on site with holiday and sickness cover
  - associated training and salary costs
  - personal exposure to liability claims for the Trustees
  - associated insurance costs

DADCA's suggestion that the fitness suite could be franchised out to a specialist provider has to be ruled out. Including this would make the Community Centre ineligible for grant support under EU State Aid rules.

In any event, we were told in a meeting at UHI with the Director of Golf Studies that a fitness suite is to be installed in Ross House, for the physical fitness module of the Golf Professional course. We were told that this will be open to the public for extended opening hours. There is accordingly no case for including a fitness suite in the Community Centre.

### ***Curling***

A separate feasibility study has been taking place simultaneously for the North Highland Curling Trust, to determine whether a new curling rink could be justified, somewhere north of Inverness, to replace that which was lost at Brora. NHCT's study will determine the potential market, best location, the preferred size and the building cost of a new rink. It should deliver its findings at roughly the same time as this exercise. The Trust confirmed its interest in investigating whether there is benefit in a joint development with DADCA.

This would be a very substantial development in its own right, with an estimated cost in the region of £2m. To protect the interests of this project, any involvement with curling would have to be fully self-financing (capital and revenue).

After meeting the NHCT's consultants together with Jefcoate Anderson we jointly conclude that:

- the footprint of a combined building could not readily be accommodated on the site, after allowing for parking and access roads, and leaving sufficient space for football and the Highland Gathering
- the cost and complexity of the building would overbalance this project
- the proposition would make funding applications more difficult and jeopardise the comparatively straightforward funding of a Community Centre
- the idea should be rejected.

## **Appendix G Disability and child security related design issues**

We consulted the Sutherland Access Panel. Legislation requires any planning application for a new Community Centre to include a Disability Access Statement. The Act also applies to major refurbishments of old buildings like the Social Club.

We have already identified the design requirements below. They don't necessarily put costs up if designed into a new building. They do make refurbishment of old buildings much more difficult.

### **Wheelchair access**

- Accessible parking. Button access to the main door.
- No steps or ramps, all access on the level. That applies to fire exits too.
- Toilet provision.
- One low height serving hatch in lunch club room
- One low height preparation surface in the kitchen.

### **Ambulant disability**

- Parking, access, and toilet provision as above.
- Handrails and seats readily available in all areas.
- Internal doors that are easy to push in a weakened state ( $\leq 15$  Newtons)

### **Hearing disability**

- Induction loop in main hall, portable induction devices for use in other rooms
- Acoustic design in all areas to reduce echo
- Suppression of electronic equipment to prevent interference with hearing aids

### **Visual impairment**

- Tactile figures (not braille) on doors
- Walking guidance on hard surfaces (i.e. knobbly bits on paved areas)
- Simple, clear signage
- Non-vivid non-white colour schemes to avoid dazzle (e.g. for Age Related Macular Degeneration)
- Coloured backgrounds to light switches, hand dryers, and similar wall mounted appliances (AMD)
- Avoid finishes which cause strobing (i.e. no striped floors or jazzy tiles)
- Lighting designed to avoid pools of light (AMD again)

### **Learning Disability / Stroke / Dementia**

- Access arrangements as above. Add accessible parking for a larger vehicle like a minibus
- Again, avoidance of vivid colour, or sudden colour changes
- Simple, clear signage
- Changing bed in the disabled toilet

**Children (not a disability topic)**

- Nappy changing area and dedicated toilet in the Activity Room (removes need for extra carer)
- Secure door entry system for Activity Room
- Soft matting on the floor
- Secure outdoor play area with soft surface, in sight of parents
- CCTV