

Site H226 & Liversedge FC

Introduction

I'm here today to represent site H226 and on behalf of Mr Gawthorpe the President of Liversedge Football Club to stress the special circumstances as to why we believe this site should be released from the greenbelt.

Liversedge Football Club is a valuable community facility serving Spennings Valley, Dewsbury, Batley, Mirfield & Morley and has developed the only stadium in North Kirklees capable of staging floodlit matches to host Finals, School Representative Games and charity matches and consequently is in great demand. Youth coaching academies are also extremely popular with the local community. The Club play in the Northern Counties League Premier Division but are now facing expulsion at the end of the 2018/19 season unless they upgrade their facilities to comply with the statutory requirements laid down by the Football Association which include provision for female players and officials and disabled facilities.

If the club is expelled from the league it will ultimately close due to the loss of revenue which is required to maintain the ground. The only way the club can be saved is by finding an alternative access road and therefore why site H226 has been proposed.

Club background history

Liversedge Football Club has existed since 1895 and has played from the Clayborn site since the second world war. The ground was rented until 2000 when it was purchased from the council based on 'security of tenure' to enable the football club to obtain their own grants. They were assured by the council that they would be supported in any future expansion plans.

10 years ago, Liversedge secured funding of £500,000, subject to planning approval, from the Football Association Ground Improvement Fund and together with Cleckheaton and Gomersal FC who are partnered with the club, applied for planning permission to build a new pavilion with improved facilities. Adjoining land would also be purchased from the council to accommodate additional mini training pitches and a 3G playing surface. They were advised that the application would be refused due to the unsuitable access road into the Club and if an alternative access was not found it would be very unlikely that any future development would be passed.

The Current Access

The current access is via Quaker Lane which is a narrow, un adopted, pot holed bridleway off a sharp bend on Hightown Road.

The lane cannot accommodate cars entering and exiting at the same time due to its narrow width and is totally unsuitable for today's modern football which often involves many vehicles and team coaches, currently having to park on Hightown Road causing obstruction to residents. The club feel very embarrassed that disabled visiting team supporters have to alight on Hightown Road and navigate the lane in order to access the ground. I also understand that visiting teams must carry all their equipment down the lane from the coach. On busy match days, traffic can be seen queuing on Hightown Road trying to enter the lane and requires a stewarding system.

New road & residential development

Over the last few years since being approached by the Football Club committee, we have worked very closely together with a view to creating a new access route off Hightown Road that would allow Quaker Lane to be closed off and used only for accessing the residential properties and for pedestrians, linking into the local public footpath network.

We have commissioned various studies including a Highways Report which demonstrates access can be safely secured, such that the club would benefit all round, in relation to access and the ability to increase its facilities.

Given the significant costs associated with the new road, there is a requirement to enable this proposal to come forward through a residential re-development of the land for around 70 residential dwellings. It seems the sole reason the Council have not allocated the land for development is down to the fact that it is in the Green Belt.

Whilst I fully understand the role that Green Belt plays I don't agree with the council's decision to reject the development as I feel that the positive impact to the local community has not been fully considered, especially as site H564, which is adjacent to H226, was approved on the first draft plan for a development of 321 houses, whilst also being situated in the Green Belt and with no obvious benefits to the local community. H564 was subsequently rejected on the second draft plan but only due the transport access which involved trees, now placed under a preservation order and not due to its Green

Belt status. Its colour scoring was lower than site H226 yet it was initially approved for housing. It is also bordered by residential housing as is H226 and it could be argued that both areas of land are very similar.

Feasibility Report

When site H226 was rejected on the first plan, the council suggested that the club appeal and subsequently obtain an Access feasibility study to look for alternative routes into the club. After obtaining a grant, they engaged consultants in 2017 to carry out a survey which concluded that the new access road would be the only viable solution.

The council also suggested that alternative sites should be considered. This would be completely impractical as the ground can only be used as a football field for the next 80 years, so would be of little interest to any potential purchaser especially with the poor access road and no possibility of future development.

Support

The Club has considerable support from local leagues and schools and submitted a petition in 2016 with 750 signatures supporting a new access into the club. Its plight is well documented locally and has featured in 14 newspaper articles all emphasising just how the loss of this facility would impact on the area. We have recently lost Whitcliffe Mounts sporting facilities and we are now potentially looking at the loss of an even greater stadium known in the local area as the 'little Wembley'. A venue which currently costs the council nothing.

They have regional support from the West Riding County Football Association who consider that if Liversedge closed, then 160,000 people will lose an important sports venue in an area where there are not the same facilities. They also advise that the last 5 new club stadiums to be built in this league, have all come through housing development as the local authorities are no longer able to support community clubs.

We feel that site H226 has very special circumstances in relation to other sites which may have been released from the Green Belt yet provided no major benefits to the local community.

To summarise, we are offering to provide a purpose built new access road to enable the football club to reinstate the funding that they were promised, and build all the new facilities that they require in order to take the club forward. Releasing the land from the Green Belt would enable the development and secure the future of the club as if a solution is not found then it will ultimately close next year.

It is now 10 years since the original planning application was submitted to upgrade the facilities, so you can imagine that if they were not up to standard then, 10 years on, they are most certainly out dated, and the league really have had no alternative but to take this action, although sympathetic to the cause.

It's quite remarkable that we are in 2018 yet it is still not a priority to assist the club in its efforts to accommodate the needs of disabled and female facilities.

H226 is a perfect site with no obstructions and would provide a moderate amount of much needed housing in return for an even better sporting venue for the local community and beyond.

If you would like more in depth information on any of the points raised I would be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

Mr Gawthorpe, the President of Liversedge FC was hoping to be able to speak today however we were advised this wasn't possible so I am also attending on his behalf.

BRIEFING NOTE

PLANNING APPRAISAL OF POTENTIAL SITE ACCESS OPTIONS LIVERSEDGE FOOTBALL CLUB

Peacock and Smith have been instructed to consider the various access options in order to improve access to Liversedge Football Club ('the club') and allow the club to as a minimum maintain its league status and avoid demotion due to the lack of required facilities at the site.

This Briefing Note ('BN') appraises the various access options considered by the appointed highways consultants, Bryan G Hall ('BGH'). Their Site Access Options note is enclosed and referenced throughout.

Site and Surrounding Context

The club is located in Cleckheaton and is approximately 0.5 miles south of the Town Centre. The club is located east of Quaker Lane, which is in turn south east of Hightown Road.

A site visit was undertaken on Monday 14th August.



(Map 1: Site Location; red line denoting approximate boundaries of Liversedge Football Club)

The Existing Access Arrangements

The club currently takes a single access from a junction of Quaker Lane onto Hightown Road. Quaker Lane is an unadopted road and currently allows access to the east of the road to 12 dwellings as well as the football club. It narrows to a single track where residents have developed car parking on the western side narrowing the road significantly. Quaker Lane is also a designated bridleway.

Access Options

Access Option 1 – Quaker Lane

As mentioned above, Quaker Lane runs south east from Hightown Road as a single track unadopted highway which provides access to 12 homes and the club. The track is also a public bridleway which leads to the Ludite Trail and Spen Valley Greenway. BGH obtained highways boundary information from Kirklees Metropolitan District Council (KMDC). It indicates that Quaker Lane does not belong to the local highways. This would suggest that residents who front onto the lane and possibly those that live at its southern extent, including the football club, may be responsible for the upkeep of the Lane and have a duty to maintain access for all users of the bridleway.

BGH note that several of the properties along Quaker Lane have fenced off, and therefore narrowed sections of the access road, in order to create additional parking areas for themselves and visitors. At this stage the ownership information, including whether these additional car parking areas have been added to any title deeds is unclear. However, it is understood that the parking situation has been in place for 10+ years. Furthermore, Quaker Lane is a bridleway and therefore may have restrictive covenants and the areas where the car parking has been created maybe unlawful. This is a matter for the legal profession to comment on and falls outside the scope of this BN.



(Photo 1: Examples of car parking now fenced off and in use by residents of Quaker Lane)

BGH consider this option would only be suitable, subject to the removal of the car parking areas that have been created and therefore the widening to a suitable width of the majority of the lane. However, BGH outline that the entrance to Quaker Lane from Hightown Road is 3.6m in width and bordered by property boundary walls on either side, this limits the potential for widening at this point and therefore reduces the likelihood of Quaker Lane being used as a two-way access into the football club in the future without a management plan in place.



(Photo 2: Existing access along Quaker Lane, onto Hightown Road)

In summary, subject to the ownership of the car parking areas being established and the removal of the car parking areas if feasible and overgrown shrubbery, this would potentially present a suitable access option for the football club.

Access Option 2 – Clayborn View

Clayborn View is accessed further north on Hightown Road. It is a cul-de-sack that provides access to c. 60/70 dwellings. It has a footway either side and highways boundary information from the Council confirms that the road is adopted.

To the south of Clayborn View is a small parcel of open space that is currently grassed with sporadic mature tree planting. It is understood that this parcel of land is under the ownership of KMDC and therefore any access proposal here may potentially require the land in question to be purchased by the club from KMDC or another agreement.



(Photo 3: Area of green space between Clayborn View and the football club)

Access from here would require the loss of the open space and development of a new road/ access. Further investigation and advice from an arboriculturist would be required but there may be potential routes into the site which do not require the removal of a significant number of trees.

In addition, BGH have suggested that a potential access/ exit only situation may be possible with access from Quaker Lane and this an exit only route.

In summary, subject to agreement with the Council and further accessibility modelling studies to confirm a suitable access, access could potentially be achieved through Clayborn view.

Access Option 3 – Hightown Road

During the site visit a discussion was held regarding the potential for a new road to be created through a proposed housing development to the south west of the football club.

The proposal would entail the removal of two dwellings from Hightown Road to facilitate access to 79 new dwellings. A new spine road would lead directly to the football club. This access would be suitable for emergency services and coaches and would allow two way traffic into the football club. As part of the proposals, potential access from Quaker Lane would be extinguished leaving this simple for the dwellings who currently use it. At present, representations have been submitted to the emerging Kirklees Local Plan. However, no planning application has been submitted.

However, these representations have been rejected by the Council as the land to the rear of Hightown Road is within the Green Belt. Any application would be considered contrary to the emerging development plan and would require very special circumstances to justify. On this basis, it is therefore very unlikely that the access road will be constructed within the club's timescale of two years, as it would require a full planning application be prepared, submitted, considered and approved by the Council and the development of the road completed.

In summary, access from Hightown Road, through the potential new development is not considered a suitable option.

Access Option 4 – Pyenot Gardens (via Spen Valley Greenway)

During the site visit a discussion was held regarding potential for an access via Pyenot Gardens, across the Spen Valley Green Way and along the eastern boundary of the club.

The Spen Valley Greenway is built on a disused railway line linking the towns of Cleckheaton, Dewsbury, Heckmondwike and Bradford. It now forms part of National Cycle Network Route 66. The route is used by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.

Access would require the removal of one, perhaps two houses as the two homes on either side of the existing access onto the greenway restrict the opportunities to widen the route for vehicular access. A new access road would then need to be created along the southern boundary of the football club, all of which would be within the green belt.



(Photo 4: Pedestrian Route from Pyenot Gardens onto the Spen Valley Greenway behind)

In summary, access into the site from Pyenot Gardens across the Spen Valley Greenway is not considered a suitable option.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The above, in addition to the Site Access Options note from Bryan G Hall, assesses four potential options. The summaries of BGH note are as follows:

- *Quaker Lane is restricted by land ownership issues along its length which may restrict the club's ability to widen along its length and the width of the Lane where it meets Hightown Road is restrictive with no feasible way of increasing the width.*
- *Clayborn View offers a potential solution across land to its southern extent but mature trees may be protected and limit the opportunities to build an access here. It is unlikely that residents in this estate would welcome the access as it would see coaches and visitors using the route into the site and may lead to additional on street parking issues.*
- *An access road from Hightown Road through a potential future residential development to the west of the site would be a suitable solution but given the planning history and objections to development it may be a significant amount of time before any developer is able to build on this land.*
- *Access into the site from Pyenot Gardens across the Spen Valley Greenway is not feasible as the two homes on either side of the existing access onto the greenway restrict the opportunities to widen the route for vehicular access.*

In summary, subject to the ownership of the car parking areas being established and the removal of the car parking areas and overgrown shrubbery, Quaker Lane would present the best and most suitable access option for the football club.

Alternatively, Clayborn View may offer a potential solution, in particularly as a one way entry with Quaker Lane forming the entrance only route into the site and Clayborn View offering an exit only situation.

The next step would be to engage a suitable planning solicitor who can establish ownership rights, including development on a bridled way, to understand if clearance and removal of the car parking from Quaker Lane can be undertaken.

If none of the above options considered suitable are feasible. The only alternative option to consider would be a relocation of the club to an alternative site.

MT

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Project Name:	Liversedge Football Club
BGH Reference:	16-471-001.02
Subject:	Site Access Options
Date:	September 2017

Introduction

Bryan G Hall have been appointed by Liversedge FC (The Client) to consider the feasibility of potential new or enhanced locations from which suitable access into the existing football club site could be achieved or improved. This note, following a visit to the site on 5th September has identified some four potential locations and the merits of each are expanded upon below.

This Technical Note (TN) details the findings of the site visit and recommendations associated with each of the access locations considered. **Appendix BGH1** shows the site location and the access locations considered in context.

The note is set out in the following sections:

1. The Existing Situation,
2. Access Option 1 - Quaker Lane,
3. Access Option 2 - Clayborn View,
4. Access Option 3 - Hightown Road,
5. Access Option 4 - Spen Valley Greenway,
6. Conclusion and Recommendations.

This document should be read in conjunction with the following information contained with at the appendices:

BGH1 – Site Location Plan – 16/471/LOC/002

BGH2 – Highway Boundary Information

BGH3 – Proposed Access Improvements for Clayborn Football Ground

The Existing Situation

Liversedge FC is located to the south-east of Hightown Road in the town of Cleckheaton and is currently accessed via Quaker Lane as shown in **Appendix BGH1**. Hightown Road is a local distributor type road which provides access to a number of housing estates and runs in a general north east to south west direction between A643 Westgate in the north and A649 in the south. It has footways on both sides of the carriageway, street lighting and is subject to a 30mph speed limit.

Quaker Lane is a residential street which runs in a general north to south direction from the A643 Westgate in the north to Hightown Road in the south. It has footways and dwellings on both sides of the carriageway, is street lit and is subject to a 30mph speed limit. Quaker Lane intersects Hightown Road at a priority controlled crossroads before continuing south as an un-adopted single track highway to Liversedge FC, where it then becomes a bridleway only and forms part of the Ludite Trail. This un-adopted highway is currently the only access to Liversedge FC and serves some 12 homes in addition to the football club. The Lane is also signed as a bridleway which leads to the Ludite Way and has no formal footway provision along its length to Liversedge FC.

The un-adopted section of Quaker Lane has made narrower by some residents, this is understood to have occurred 10 or more years ago as a way to create some additional parking, this has resulted

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in a narrower access Lane for Liversedge FC. The un-adopted highway varies in width between 4.7m to the south and 3.6m to the north at the junction with Hightown Road.

In order for the football club to continue in its current league and secure the potential for progression in the future it is necessary for the club to expand and improve facilities on site such as car parking, access and changing facilities etc. Quaker Lane is currently only single track with no passing places, this limits the flow of traffic into and out of the site and restricts access for emergency vehicles. The following therefore sets out the findings of the site visit and recommendations associated with each of the access locations considered.

Access Option 1 - Quaker Lane

As discussed above, Quaker Lane runs south from Hightown Road as a single track un-adopted highway which provides access to 12 homes and Liversedge FC. The track is also a public bridleway which leads to the Ludite Trail and Spen Valley Greenway. Highway Boundary information obtained from Kirklees Metropolitan District Council (KMDC) and contained in **Appendix BGH2** indicates that Quaker Lane does not belong to the local highways. This would suggest that residents who front onto the Lane and possibly those that live at its southern extent, including the football club may be responsible for the upkeep of the Lane and have a duty to maintain access for all users of the bridleway.

It was noted on site that several of the properties along Quaker Lane have fenced off, and therefore narrowed sections of the access road in order to create additional parking areas for themselves and visitors, as shown in figures 1-3 below.



Figure 1 Quaker Lane parking 1



Figure 2 Quaker Lane parking 2



Figure 3 Quaker Lane parking 3

It is not known whether these sections of land are owned by the residents who use them for parking, but assuming that the wall to the west of Quaker Lane is the original boundary then Quaker Lane

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would be of a suitable width along the majority of its length had the parking areas not been constructed.

That being said the entrance to Quaker Lane from Hightown Road is 3.6m in width and bordered by property boundary walls on either side, this limits the potential for widening at this point and therefore reduces the likelihood of Quaker Lane being used as a two-way access into the football club in the future without a management plan in place.

Access Option 2 - Clayborn View

Clayborn view is a cul-de-sac within a residential estate of around 70 dwellings accessed from Hightown Road via Royd Wood and Filley Royd to the north east of the site. Clayborn View is street lit and has footways on both sides of the carriageway. From the highway boundary information contained at appendix BGH2 we know that the street is adopted and therefore maintained by the local authority.

There is an area of public space located to the south of Clayborn View, as shown on the plan attached in **Appendix BGH1**, which has been highlighted as a potential access point into the football club. It is understood that this parcel of land is under the ownership of KMDC and therefore any access proposal here would require the land in question to be purchased by the club from KMDC.

Figure 4 below shows that there are a number of mature trees located on this parcel of land. Further investigation and advice from an arboriculturist would be required but there may be potential routes into the site which do not require the removal of a significant number of trees. Any carriageway construction across this is likely to be of a non-dig specification in order that the roots of established trees are not affected.



Figure 4 Parcel of land to south of Clayborn View

It may be appropriate to consider this location as an entry only (subject to land being available for purchase), with the existing Quaker Lane as exit only. This one-way system would be in place for users of Liversedge FC only and would be enforced through a management plan.

Access Option 3 - Hightown Road

Representations have been submitted to KMDC for 79 dwelling to be constructed on land to the west of Liversedge FC. The access road into the development from Hightown Road would provide an alternative access to the football club as shown on the submitted plans in **Appendix BGH3**. This access would be suitable for emergency services and coaches and would allow two way traffic into the football club.

The adjacent development was submitted in the draft local plan for KMDC but was rejected due to it being on green belt land. It is therefore unlikely that the access road will be constructed within the football clubs timescale of two years.

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Access Option 4 - Spen Valley Greenway

The Spen Valley Greenway forms the eastern border of Liversedge FC and also forms part of National Cycle Network Route 66. The Spen Valley Greenway is built on a disused railway line running near the River Spen between the towns of Cleckheaton, Dewsbury and Heckmondwike, eventually linking to Bradford. The route is open to pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.

A potential route into the site was highlighted from Pyenot Gardens across the Spen Valley Greenway. Pyenot Gardens is a residential street which forms part of a larger area of 100+ dwellings, as a result the route through the housing estate is restrictive with multiple locations where on-street parking occurs and minimal road widths mean that coaches may find access difficult.

The location where access across the cycle track could be gained is between two houses and as shown in Figure 5 below, the width is not great enough to allow vehicular access alongside a pedestrian, cycle and bridleway access.



Figure 5 Access across Spen Valley Greenway

Conclusion and Recommendations

A site visit was undertaken by Bryan G Hall staff to investigate the feasibility of four locations where access into Liversedge football club could be achieved. In summary,

- Quaker Lane is restricted by land ownership issues along its length which may restrict the clubs ability to widen along its length and the width of the Lane where it meets Hightown Road is restrictive with no feasible way of increasing the width.
- Clayborn View offers a potential solution across land to its southern extent but mature trees may be protected and limit the opportunities to build an access here. It is unlikely that residents in this estate would welcome the access as it would see coaches and visitors using the route into the site and may lead to additional on street parking issues.
- An access road from Hightown Road through a potential future residential development to the west of the site would be a suitable solution but given the planning history and objections to development it may be a significant amount of time before any developer is able to build on this land.
- Access into the site from Pyenot Gardens across the Spen Valley Greenway is not feasible as the two homes on either side of the existing access onto the greenway restrict the opportunities to widen the route for vehicular access.

In terms of next steps it would be our recommendation that Liversedge FC seeks legal advice on the land ownership issues on Quaker Lane and discusses potential traffic management solutions with

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KMDC to manage the flow of traffic at the junction with Hightown Road. Clayborn View may offer a potential solution as a one way entry with Quaker Lane forming an exit only route from the site but further investigation would be required.



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Project:

LIVERSEEDGE

HIGHWAY ADOPTION BOUNDARY REQUEST
 LOCATION PLAN

Title

Rev	Amendment:	Drn	Chk:	Date:
Job No:	16-471	Drawn:	NC	Checked:
Scale:	NTS	Drawing No:	16/471/LOC/002	Revision:
	A3 - 420 x 297			05.09.17



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Location



Scale = 1 : 1250



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- KEY:**
- PUBLIC FOOTPATH
 - PUBLIC BROOKWAY
 - APPROX AREA OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

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REV	AMENDMENTS	DATE

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PROPOSED ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS FOR CLABORN FOOTBALL GROUND

SCALE	DATE
1:1250 @A3	MAY 2010
DRAWING No	FIGURE 2