

Asset Transfer Request - Poltonhall Bowling Site [Poltonhall Bowling Green and Pavilion]

Bonnyrigg and Lasswade Community Council agree that there is a need to expand the local provision of early years education and wrap around child care, particularly with the expansion of the town's population and the arrival of young families in the new housing developments. Bonnyrigg and Lasswade Community Council also recognises the experience of the applicant as a service provider and acknowledge the difficulty of securing suitable premises to accommodate any expansion.

However, we have serious concerns about the suitability of the premises in this application. Main concerns are the distinct lack of suitable parking and the inevitable increase in traffic in an already congested part of Bonnyrigg. There are safety issues which the Community Council does not believe have been fully considered. We are also concerned about the proposal to use the car park at the Roman Catholic Church.

Car parking

The nearest car parks are at the far end of Lasswade Centre and also next to Tesco and other stores. Both appear to be fairly well used during the day and we noted there has been damage to the boundary wall outside Tesco Express, presumably caused by a badly parked vehicle. The lay-by outside Lasswade centre is single yellow line restricted in operation from 8am to 4.30pm. There is no suitable parking directly outside the site. The Community Council has recently been involved in discussions concerning car parking with residents in other areas of Bonnyrigg. Our concerns are that parents will drive to the new facility and will most likely want to park as close as they can outside to drop their children off and pick them up at varying times throughout the day. They are likely to be in a rush, late for work, worrying about traffic, so might not be prepared to walk the distance from the car parks. Because of the lack of parking on the Eskdale Drive side of the bowling facility, there is a high risk of parents parking on the main road, close to the traffic lights and pedestrian crossing on Polton Street.

The community asset transfer application states that the applicant will pursue discussions with the Roman Catholic Church over use of their car park, although it does not indicate whether there is yet an agreement in place over this. The Community Council is concerned that parents will not want to take the time and trouble to park there and walk round to the old clubhouse, especially if they have to open and shut the Church car park gate. If the gate is to be left open for the child care drop offs/pickups, how will the applicant stop other traffic from using it? Also, will the entrance to the Church car park be wide enough for the volume of traffic it would be serving?

Perhaps it could be a condition of the asset transfer for the applicant to obtain planning permission to use part of the former bowling green for parking. This would involve additional costs to put in a surface and safe access and egress. Since the applicant proposes to obtain the site for free it would not be unreasonable for them to seek other sources of funding to help with this.

Traffic

The primary purpose of the facility is early years learning and childcare, so it will be used by pre-school children during the day which is the busiest time for traffic. There is already a large volume of traffic around Lasswade Centre, particularly at the start and end of the high school day. If the asset transfer is successful, we believe nearby residents will experience and report increased traffic volume which combined with a lack of suitable parking could result in a serious traffic incident involving a child.

The Community Council suggests that a more appropriate use of the bowling site would be as a community facility for elderly residents, for example for social meetups. The site is on a bus route and may also be accessible for the community bus to drop off and pick up. In the evening it could be used for groups like youth club where parking would not be a necessity.

Bonnyrigg and Lasswade Community Council