

**NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL**

**REPORT**

To: LEARNING AND LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE		Subject: BELLSHILL ACADEMY - PLAYING FIELDS PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
From: HEAD OF COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND LEARNING		
Date: 10 January 2014	Ref: LMCM/1/NR	

**1. INTRODUCTION**

This report seeks approval for playing pitches at Bellshill Academy to be declared surplus to operational requirements in order to establish a development project led by the Active Bellshill Community Group (ABC Group) to further develop the pitches for school and community use.

**2. BACKGROUND**

**2.1 Active Bellshill Community Group**

The Active Bellshill Community (ABC) Group is a forward thinking community organization which has been formed as a result of a consultative exercise carried out within the Bellshill community which explored the adequacy of the existing sports facilities within the Bellshill area. The demise of Bellshill Athletic actively playing in the town was the main catalyst for the consultation. However, the group are now looking much wider than football provision and have aspirations to create rowing, cricket, netball, athletics, fencing, badminton, cycling as well as football and rugby facilities. The use of Bellshill Academy playing fields is key to realising the ambitions of the project.

2.2 The group was formed in the autumn of 2012, following on from the public consultation, with the remit to address issues within the community through promoting involvement in sport and other activities. Volunteers from numerous local clubs have given their time to develop the group and the project. Lloyds Bank have committed staff resources to support the project and that support is ongoing at present. The group also has an experienced independent business on board.

2.3 Initial discussions with the group centred on the possible use of Strathclyde Park. However, following the community consultation exercise, the pitches adjacent to Bellshill Academy were identified as offering the project the best chance of success. The group has engaged in discussions with Learning and Leisure Services to look at the possibility of developing this area in the centre of the town. The plans have also been put to with the head teacher of the school and several sport national governing bodies. All are in support of the vision for the project.

2.4 Further community consultation with the various community sports groups on the proposals is well under way and has received very positive feedback to date. Dialogue has also taken place with other stakeholders including; the Bellshill and District Community Forum, the Bellshill Local Area Partnership, the Lanarkshire Mosque and Bellshill Academy Parents Forum who have all indicated their support in principle for the proposals.

### 3. CONSIDERATIONS

#### 3.1 Project Aims and Objectives

The overall objective of the ABC Group is to build community cohesion through promoting various sports and activities based in the heart of the community and developing facilities to enhance the current programmes offered by local clubs and societies. The overall project aims are to:-

- strengthen the community by providing a focal point for a range of community based activities and programmes;
- provide new opportunities for more citizens to get involved in sport and recreational activities as participants and volunteers;
- provide learning and development opportunities for all parts of our community;
- have a positive impact on social targets such as health improvement, reduction in crime and employment opportunities; and
- create volunteering opportunities for the community, large companies and experienced business leaders.

A range of specific benefits have been identified, for example:-

- creation of a true community led project in one of the most deprived areas of Scotland (reference: 2012 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation);
- increased participation by school pupils through availability of improved facilities and options;
- increased numbers of people of all ages being active (helping to achieve health improvement targets);
- provision of opportunities and inspiration for participants to achieve high levels of sporting performance;
- to share successes at all levels equally; and
- capacity building through all aspects of creating, managing and using and developing the facilities and their increased usage.

3.2 The development of the academy pitches is not a future funded project identified within the Learning and Leisure Services capital programme. The site is not a priority for development in the current programme. Greater priority for playing pitch development exists in other areas of the authority. However, the ABC Group has an opportunity to access external funding that the Council cannot access. This is an opportunity that requires to be considered particularly recognising the project objectives. These objectives are:

- staged upgrading of existing facilities to meet demand;
- multi sport usage;
- affordable all day usage, from fun to elite;
- catering for all ages (reactive to changing needs);
- emphasis on participation at all levels;
- providing a location for best of breed projects;
- community led and managed;
- commercially sustainable; and
- joint use to meet needs of Bellshill Academy during school hours and for pupils outside the school day, simultaneously with community use.

3.3 In terms of benefits realization, the project recognises that good facilities can:-

- contribute to the general quality of life in the community. Residents spend more time in the community, are more familiar with one another and contribute to a sense of community. People of low income, particularly youths, may have little other chance for these experiences;
- instill a sense of ownership and community pride in residents. A neighbourhood or community rich in the opportunities that community facilities can provide is experienced as a good place to live and engenders pride of place in residents;
- provide services that help everyone;
- help prevent crime and other antisocial behavior;
- increase the level of fairness and equity in a community. When all residents have access to facilities that make life better and more pleasant, regardless of their socio-economic status, communities take a step toward greater equity;
- improve the economic climate and prospects of the community; and
- provide gathering places that improve the social character of community life.

#### 4. CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

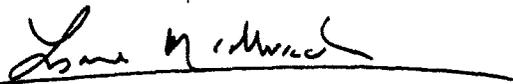
##### 4.1 Financial Implications

The Council has no financial input to the project. All funding required to deliver the project will be applied for by the ABC Group.

The service would be consulted on all matters relating to the development of the site.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Learning and Leisure Committee is asked to approve that the Bellshill Academy pitches are made surplus to operational requirement to allow negotiations to progress with the ABC Group with a view to an operational lease or community asset transfer being put in place to allow the establishment of the project to develop new/upgraded facilities.

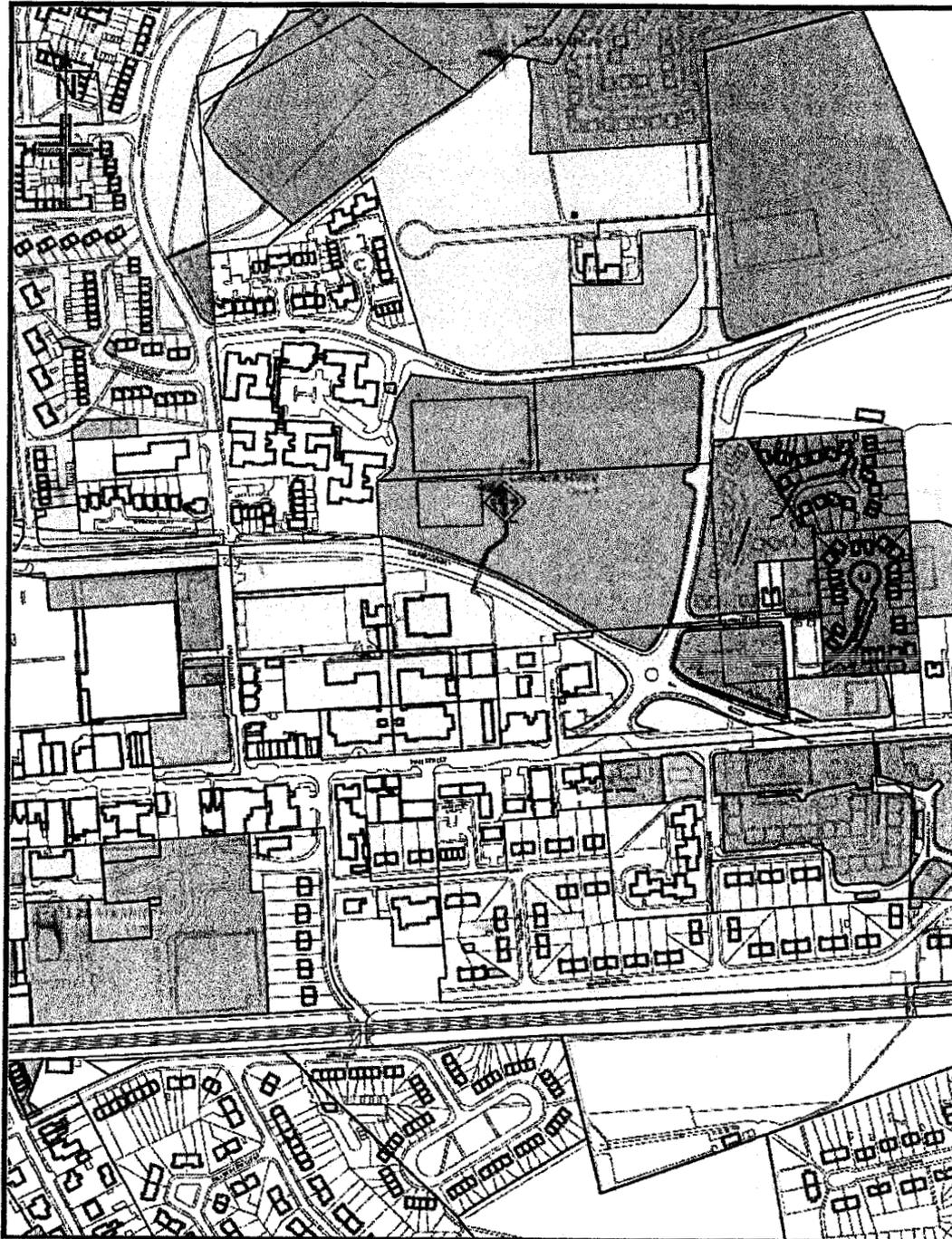


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