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Bedfordshire Schools Trust Limited, BEST House,
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PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Community consultation on the disposal of land and the development of sports facilities at the Samuel Whitbread Academy.

Since the Samuel Whitbread Academy opened in 1973 there have been no improvements to the outside sports facilities despite the number of students on role rising from around 500 to over 1700.

This lack of facilities means that, although the school is now one of the largest in the country and is rated as being Good with Outstanding Features by OFSTED, it has some of the poorest sports facilities to be found in a school of its size.

It is therefore our intention to develop some of the playing fields at the Academy by providing an extensive range of new sports facilities for the benefit of our students and the local community. To help fund this major improvement, part of the land will be used to build 64 new homes. The planning permission for which has already been agreed by Central Bedfordshire Council.

Before we are able to dispose of some of the land and develop the new sports facilities on the extensive grounds that will remain we are undertaking a community consultation to meet the requirements of the Department of Education and to ensure that we are considering the views of all stakeholders.

The Bedfordshire Schools Trust is absolutely committed to improving local schools and providing the very best environment for all students within our community so your views are extremely important to us.

The following information outlines the area of need, our plans, the purpose of the consultation and how you can make your views known.

Why are these facilities needed?

- The existing grass pitches are very poor quality. They do not drain and so use is highly weather dependent. In winter the pitches to the west of the site are often unusable. This generates excessive wear on the other pitches which reduces their useful capacity.
- The school was originally supposed to be provided with an all-weather surface in the rebuild and reconditioning of the facilities by Bilfinger Berger and Galliford Try. Unfortunately this facility was cut as part of a cost saving exercise.
- Competitive football is restricted due to the poor quality of pitches and for Football Association competitions other compliant grounds have to be hired.

Dr Alan Lee, CEO & National Leader of Education.



BEST Schools: Samuel Whitbread Academy, Etonbury Academy, Robert Bloomfield Academy, Gothic Mede Academy, Langford Village Academy, Gravenhurst Academy and BEST Nurseries.
Company Registration Number: 07546141 VAT Registration Number: 120 7845 28 BEST has exempt charitable status by virtue of being an academy trust.

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- Cricket is not played at the Academy as the surface is so poor – it is dangerous due to the uneven nature of the ground, the quality of the grass and the slope. The Academy can only play away fixtures or rent local grounds if they are available. This severely restricts the performance of our young people and disadvantages them in competition with others. Therefore all athletics and cricket is taken off site. Staff and pupils (about 30 for each match / meet) have to take minibuses to Sandy Sports Centre and other venues.
- There is a lack of floodlighting and an all-weather surface. This means that no after school matches can be played in the winter. As a result the school is forced to play more away fixtures and many fixtures and training sessions are cancelled due to the poor quality of the facilities.
- The pitches are on an excessive slope which means that no higher level matches can be played. This results in the Academy renting other local compliant pitches for competitive matches. The condition of the grass and the grounds do not enable young players to reach their full potential.
- The school does not have a 'throwing cage' for athletics so the Academy cannot host athletic competitions. Developing young talent cannot take place despite the Trust having an all-through age range from 6 years when most sports start to identify talent.
- There is no outdoor pavilion/changing facility separate from the main Academy buildings which can be used for changing, meetings, recreational activities and socialising by Trust schools and the community. The new pavilion will allow these activities and will include a much-needed dual use fitness gym. This area will also provide community car parking and ensure safeguarding management routines can be applied.
- During the examination season our indoor sports areas are used to accommodate the exams which further reduces sporting opportunities for pupils.
- As part of this development and the subsequent variation to our PFI agreement the indoor facilities will also become available for wider community use including; the sports hall with cricket nets and bowling machine, the dance studios, the drama studios, the music facilities, engineering, home economics, the theatre, ICT suites and classrooms. Without this development and the changes in the PFI agreement these facilities will remain unavailable to local clubs, the community and any adult education classes. These facilities will become available throughout the year.
- We would like an all-weather surface to be available for community use and to do this, we would like our Trust to run and control these facilities rather than relying on the PFI Facilities Management company, Galliford Try, who have not developed any community use of our current facilities.

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How will the land be used?

Some of the land will be sold to a developer to build 64 new homes. A separate planning consultation has already been carried out and planning permission has already been agreed.

The remaining land will be retained by Samuel Whitbread Academy and used for playing fields. The sale of the land to the developer will fund much needed sports facilities which will include:

- better drained and level high quality competition grass pitches
- a 3G 'power shock' pitch with floodlighting which will illuminate adjacent grass areas for coaching, training and other activities to take place in the evenings and during the winter. Competitions and full match play will be possible throughout the year and the Northampton Saints Academy will utilise these facilities to bring high level coaching to all local clubs in Central Bedfordshire
- a high quality competition athletics track
- a throwing cage for safe coaching, training and competition
- an artificial cricket wicket and quality outfield (cricket pitch)
- new floodlit tennis courts with netball markings will bring higher standards and competitions including community use
- a dual use sports pavilion with gym facilities
- an outdoor floodlit basketball court
- two long jump pits
- cricket nets.

What is this consultation about?

This consultation is specifically about the '*Disposal and change of use of playing fields and school land*' as it is our intention to dispose of a portion of the playing fields and to create new sports facilities on some of the playing fields that will remain.

The purpose of the consultation is to ensure that you are fully informed about our plans and have the opportunity to request further information and give your views.

These views are then taken into consideration during the final decision making process.

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The consultation period

The consultation will run from Tuesday 2nd May 2017 to Tuesday 20th June 2017.

How to give your views

Attend the public meeting

You can attend the public meeting where there will be the opportunity to speak with representatives from the Academy and the Bedfordshire Schools Trust about this proposal. You will also be able to view the plans for the land and the new sports facilities.

The public meeting will be held in the reception area of the Samuel Whitbread Academy on Wednesday 24th May from 6.00pm – 8.00pm.

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Write to us

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