

Dear members and parents of the 4th Oxford Scouts,

I am writing on behalf of North Hinksey Parish Council (NHPC) to invite you to a public meeting regarding the current planning application (reference P19/V0696/FUL) for new shared-use facilities to replace the current Louie Memorial Pavilion and 4th Oxford Scout Hut.

In response to inaccurate information circulated within the community prior to the recent elections, NHPC has issued a statement to clarify its current position regarding negotiations with the 4th Oxford Scouts for your continued use of facilities at Louie Memorial Playing Fields beyond the end of the current lease (July 2020). The key points of NHPC's position are:

1) Guarantee of longer-term priority access

NHPC recognises the value of scouting to young people in our community and intends to reach a new legal agreement with the 4th Oxford Scouts. This will guarantee your continuous presence at Louie Memorial Playing Fields beyond the end of the current lease in 2020.

2) Provision of new facilities to support current and future usage

NHPC is committed to providing high-quality facilities that will enable the 4th Oxford Scouts to thrive now and in the future. NHPC supports the current plans for shared facilities that have been designed around the Scouts' stated requirements. NHPC nonetheless remains open to amending the current plans for further improvements to the shared facilities.

3) Assurance of affordability

NHPC intends that the costs to the Scouts for priority access to the new shared-use facilities will be affordable, comparable to the costs otherwise incurrable for running costs, maintenance and longer-term upkeep of the current Scout Hut.

4) Continuity of core Scouts programme and assurance of future management

NHPC will not require the 4th Oxford Scouts to reduce your current programme (one of each section of Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, and an associated District Explorers section). NHPC expects the 4th Oxford Scouts to have Trustee representation on the management committee for the new shared facilities, through which you would work collaboratively with other community stakeholders in planning future expansion.

From comments submitted during the consultation on the planning application, it appears that NHPC has not been clear enough about what facilities to support scouting activities are actually available within the current plans. These include:

- a larger hall with access to a much larger kitchen, dedicated toilets, and secure outdoor space directly off the main hall.
- inner doors within the shared building to ensure safeguarding and exclusive access to this area during weekly section meetings.
- a fenced (ventilated) exclusive-access space at the side of the building where tents can be kept securely while drying after camping events.

- the current Scout Hut land retained as a fenced area dedicated for Scouts' woodcraft activities. Removing the hut frees up over 200 sq m of secure outdoor space that can be used for fire building, tent pitching, and other camping preparation. Exclusive external access to this area means that the Scouts maintain freedom to do these activities at any time, without impacting other users of the building.
- The exclusive-access external space includes 25 sq m of camping kit storage space (a 50% increase over the current camping store in the hut) that can be fully powered, heated, and ventilated to a specification advised by the Scout Group.

NHPC would appreciate the opportunity to present the current plans to you in an interactive way, and to hear directly from you about your concerns with the current plans. In holding a public meeting councillors want to encourage a balanced discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of both the current situation and the proposed plans. An intended outcome of the meeting would be an agreed way forward for securing a new legal agreement between the 4th Oxford Scouts and NHPC beyond the current lease.

The newly-elected NHPC recognises that the negotiation process undertaken by the previous Council through a working group and formal parish council meetings has reached a stalemate. The new Council is keen to renew the collaborative discussions that were held between the 4th Oxford Scouts and NHPC representatives between 2013 and 2018.

Council proposes this public meeting to ensure that everyone has equal time and opportunity to present their views, and that a meaningful discussion can be had about the issues raised. We are open to all suggestions for how the facilities at Louie Memorial Playing Fields can work best for the Scouts in collaboration with the wider community. The date, time and venue for the meeting would be set with guidance from the 4th's Executive Committee to enable maximum participation.

NHPC hopes that you will take this opportunity to work with the parish council in a new way. Please confirm by reply to the email address below if you are agreeable to the proposed public meeting being held. Ideally this meeting would be held by the end of May, before the planning application is determined by Vale of White Horse District Council.

Sincerely,

Colin Ryde, Clerk to North Hinksey Parish Council
clerk@northhinksey-pc.gov.uk