



Tuesday 13 April 2021

Dear Inox Property Group, North Devon District Council Planning Department, Ilfracombe Town Council, Sport England, Devon Football Association and Devon Rugby Football Union.

Last night a meeting was held between Ilfracombe Town Football Club Adult and Junior Sections and Ilfracombe Rugby Football Club Adult and Junior Sections to discuss the community sports facilities that are being outlined for the “southern extension housing development”, planning applications 71532 and 71537.

The adult and youth sections at our town’s football club and rugby club are currently at capacity. The current facility provision at both is over spilling with usage. Currently our pitches are not equipped to cater for the potential increase in membership that will arise as a result of the southern extension development. It is therefore essential for both of our clubs and the wider community sport in Ilfracombe that the new facilities provided on site cater for the population growth expected.

At the meeting last night both clubs, including youth and adult representation reviewed the facilities currently proposed and would like to make the following comments that we feel are essential to ensuring the facilities can cater for the proposed population increase in Ilfracombe as a result of this development. We would ask that all recipients of this letter work together to achieve the following:

- 1) Grass pitch space for match play is the number one priority for both clubs. This is identified in North Devon Council’s Playing Pitch Strategy, The FA Facilities Plan and is identified in the North Devon Local Plan for this site. Our vision for the new community site is that it will serve a variety of uses and can be the hub for youth sport in the town, but can also cater for adult football as we believe the added population will allow the football club to develop a third men’s team and the site will also cater for ladies football. As such we believe two grass pitches should be provided so that one can be dedicated to football and one dedicated to rugby so that we can easily manage our shared requirements. The rugby pitch should measure 100x70m to cater for rugby up to and including under 16’s level; and the football pitch should measure 100x64m to cater for youth and adult men’s and ladies. There should be 5m gap between the two pitches and 3m run-off in all other areas. This means that the total level space required would be 106m x 145m. Appropriate rugby and football posts will be required. We believe that the space outlined above can be achieved by relocating the MUGA. We do not understand the rationale for leaving space for potential future location for sports pitch/changing facilities car park currently outlined as it is so detached from the other facilities and therefore suggest this could be a more appropriate location for the MUGA.
- 2) To ensure that both sports pitches are able to cope with the usage expected, the topography of the site and the inclement weather that we experience in Ilfracombe, it is essential that both pitches have adequate primary and secondary drainage systems.
- 3) In some of our youth teams, girls and boys play together, and therefore one set of changing rooms is not adequate to cater for this. However as stated above our number one priority is to maximise grass pitch space for matches and respect that Inox Property Group will be expected to invest more in the site to achieve our priority requests outlined in point 1 and 2. Therefore what we ask in relation to the changing rooms is they be positioned and designed in a way that they can be extended in the future to add further changing rooms as and when further funding can be secured through S106 funding, the Football Foundation and the RFU. We believe this can be achieved at a later date as long as the developer provides flat land without barriers or infrastructure (pipes and cables) to the elevation adjacent to the team changing rooms.

- 4) Until such time that we are able to add additional changing rooms it is essential that there are four group bag storage areas designed into the building so that the changing rooms can be used on a rotational basis and completely vacated for the next user groups. These bag stores should be accessible from outside so that each team can store their bags together (up to 20 per team) and the manager can be responsible for the key. Lockers are not a suitable solution for youth sport.

We would like to personally thank Rob Saltmarsh at Inox Property Group for the time he gave to meet with us and although the suggestion put forward regards having a full-size artificial grass pitch on the site seemed attractive at the time, after further research we don't believe this is financially sustainable for the clubs or for the existing artificial grass pitch at Ilfracombe Academy. Instead we kindly ask that Inox Property Group focus on our requests above.

We have two further requests regards the site for consideration:

- 5) In regards to the MUGA, we agree that tarmac is the correct surface as it will provide a well-needed facility for informal sport for young people and is a low maintenance approach which will enable open door access. Could the size be increased to 34.5m x 18.25m so that it can also be used for netball as we have a growing netball club in the town and it would be a complimentary use for the site?
- 6) In terms of management of this site once construction is complete, as a multi-sports site for boys, girls, men and ladies in Ilfracombe we would kindly ask if Ilfracombe Town Council would consider taking ownership of the site; and if willing to do so that North Devon Council and Inox Property Group complete the necessary legal work required to recognise this in the S106 agreement. We feel that a site of this size and nature is a key site for the whole town and potentially too big a burden for volunteers at our clubs to manage.

We would like to thank everyone involved in helping to develop the community facilities at this site. We hope that it will be recognised that our requests are substantiated and realistic requests to ensure that the facilities provided on site are suitable to cater for the population increase expected.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Hayne, Interim Chairman, Ilfracombe Town Football Club
Richard Hopson, Secretary, Ilfracombe Town Youth Football Club
Clem Bennellick, First Team Manager, Ilfracombe Town Football Club
Kevin Davies, Chairman, Ilfracombe RFC
Daniel Turton, Chairman, Ilfracombe Sharks RFC (Youth)