

HARWELL LABORATORIES RECREATIONAL ASSOCIATION

**All correspondence should be
Addressed to The Administrator**

Letter sent: 3/08/07

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To: Miss Laura Hudson

Dear Miss Hudson

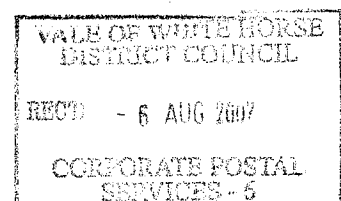
**Re: Application HAR/16731/3, proposed Hotel at Harwell Science and
Innovation Campus**

I am the Chairman of the Harwell Laboratories Recreational Association (HLRA) and am writing with regard to the proposed development of a hotel at Harwell Science and Innovation Campus. I have been on the HLRA Management Committee since 1996 and HLRA Chairman since 2000.

The HLRA hold the Licence with UKAEA to use all sports facilities on the Harwell site. The Licence provides HLRA with a high level of economic and in-kind support from UKAEA and as a consequence our members pay only a small proportion of total costs of running HLRA. The specific terms of the HLRA constitution means that all HLRA members are HLRA members, first and foremost, and from this membership individual clubs are formed. This is a private Harwell campus sports & leisure club for staff & their families. Associates are allowed from the wider community but this is restricted to a percentage of the total.

Importantly the HLRA comprises around 20 different sports clubs affiliated to HLRA and nearly 1,000 members. This proposed development impacts on only a proportion of them, namely the HLRA Tennis Club and the HLRA Squash Club. The HLRA Yoga Club has already been offered alternative accommodation in the new HLRA Pavilion (under construction).

I am writing to put the issue of sport & leisure provision on Harwell site into context.



RESPONSE FROM THE HLRA CHAIRMAN TO THE PROPOSED HOTEL DEVELOPMENT

The views expressed in this letter are my own and are based on over 10 years of managing sports on the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus. I also consider that I represent the views of the majority of site employees who simply wish to see a range of sports and leisure facilities on Harwell Science and Innovation Campus.

It is my overall conclusion that the proposed hotel development and associated leisure facility offers significant opportunities to the site and, although I regret loss of certain sports and facilities overall offers the right package of sporting and leisure facilities to complement what is there on site already.

Of importance the proposed leisure facility would be the first commercial investment in sport & leisure open to the wider community ever in the 60 year history of the campus. It has to be recognised and embraced that the private sector has a key role to play in the sports and leisure sector.

It is a quality sports & leisure offering that is equivalent to other similar offerings available at other sites. A proportion of staff at Harwell Science and Innovation Campus will never join HLRA as we cannot offer the standard and quality of facility that is on offer in this proposed development. This new facility does that.

This kind of facility tends to appeal to women and for that reason alone is extremely valuable. I have personally fought hard over 10 years to secure facilities for woman within HLRA. The male dominated Harwell of the 1950s managed to build 2 changing pavilions with no provision for ladies *at all*. Of all the current membership of HLRA there is probably only between 5-10% woman i.e. less than 100. This does not represent the current demographics of the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus employees and thus HLRA must be failing to provide facilities that woman want.

The new HLRA pavilion (under construction) demonstrates what is needed in modern facilities to embrace the requirements of new Disabled Access legislation. Some current HLRA facilities, such as the HLRA Squash club were built in a different era and would require significant investment to bring them up to modern requirements.

Many companies on the campus have corporate deals with other external leisure providers, such as Milton Park, Park Club. This obviously puts pressure on local roads and climate at key times, including lunchtimes and evenings. If the site is to be serious about reducing environmental impact then local facilities staff can walk to must be the way forward.

HLRA SQUASH CLUB

These are my specific comments about the loss of Squash at Harwell Science and Innovation Campus

It is difficult to put up any economic or sporting arguments in favour of preserving squash within the proposed new development. Since its boom years in the 1980s it

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has been in steady decline as a sport UK wide. Squash has been dropped as an Olympic Sport for London 2012 and clubs have been converted to other uses up and down the country.

Although the current Squash Club committee are honest and hard-working, and raised money to build one additional court a number of years back, in fact the current Squash club has not been economic for a number of years and it has suffered from a lack of serious investment.

When the HLRA Social Club closed we also gave up the Licence to sell alcohol. The Squash Club bar was a legal spin off from this. I consider that the HLRA will never apply for another Licence. For this reason alone it is my belief that if this club, as it stands, were to try and operate in a commercial setting outside of the funding patronage of the UKAEA, then it would fold.

I would make the point that the current club members only contribute a fraction of the total £ cost of running a commercial squash club. The membership have been heavily subsidised by the HLRA and the UKAEA for a number of years. I question what the membership would be if commercial rates had to be applied.

In summary, in the current sporting climate, Squash does not make economic sense when operated commercially. I support the view that the private sector should play a key role in the provision of sports at Harwell Science and Innovation Campus. The private sector should be able to make informed choices about what facilities their potential customers want to be provided with based on need, not on tradition. In addition, with no Olympic status at London 2012, I question the long-term support for Squash within bodies such as Sport England.

TENNIS CLUB

The potential impact of the proposed Hotel development is the consolidation of 4 hard courts and 3 grass courts into a total of 3 brand new hard courts in a different location at North Gate.

By July 2007 the 3 grass courts have been replaced by 2 hard courts and one existing hard court has been upgraded.

Although this may be considered a loss to the HLRA Tennis Club, I consider that three brand new hard courts is more than sufficient to meet the needs for tennis within HLRA for the foreseeable future. I consider that 7 courts represents "excess capacity" when compared with the membership who want to play tennis. This club is not a community club but a private club with associates. Thus it has to cater for the membership of the HLRA.

When compared to other tennis clubs in the UK I consider that there was over capacity compared with tennis playing members when based on 4 hard courts and 3 grass courts. The current 3 hard courts at North Gate meet the current HLRA needs, offer room to grow and remove the significant cost of maintaining grass courts that have limited use year round. If numbers of members increase there is potential for a 4th tennis court to be built at North Gate. At present I do not see the need.

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I can honestly say that with 7 courts available there are often empty courts at lunchtimes and at other times and I do not consider it unreasonable to schedule court use at peak times such as during matches and club nights.

It should be recognised that 7 courts came about when there were over 40,000 staff in UKAEA and around 4,000 members in HLRA. Today HLRA stands at around 1,000 members but in fact less than 10% wish to play tennis.

Again the tennis club and HLRA only paid a fraction of the cost of maintaining the grass courts. In addition, grass courts are *nice to have* facilities but are becoming increasingly difficult to manage and maintain in the current climate – both economically and actually. If given the opportunity I would recommend hard courts over grass given the very short playing window that grass offers each year.

The HLRA has received an assurance in writing (attached) that if the North Gate tennis courts have to be relocated then UKAEA will provide the land and construct 4 tennis courts elsewhere on the campus. I am happy that this number (4) and type of court (hard) will meet the needs for tennis at this site in the future if North Gate has to be redeveloped.

The HLRA Tennis Club committee has told me personally that they have submitted an objection with a different requirement for future tennis. They have now confirmed to me that this assurance from UKAEA for 4 hard courts is acceptable to them and meets their future needs. I understand that they intend to withdraw their request for their tennis specific condition to be considered and replace it with that defined in the attached letter that has been agreed by UKAEA and HLRA.

SPORT ENGLAND

I totally respect Sport England as a body and recognise their role in making planners take account of sports & leisure when new developments are made. I appreciate that individuals and clubs within HLRA may have sought support from Sport England with regard to objecting to the proposed development.

It is my view that Sport England is unlikely to have been exposed to all of the facts with regard to HLRA and thus may not be able to give a balanced judgement in this case.

My role as Chairman of HLRA has been to make the organisation sustainable as well as offering an enhanced range of facilities. I consider that Sport England would welcome this ideal. When I became Chairman 7 years ago the HLRA was making a substantial annual loss, in excess of £10k per year. Through good management we have managed to break even and put some limited funds back into the facilities.

However the HLRA is totally dependent on the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus for a significant amount of economic and in-kind support, ranging from preparing pitches to repairing buildings.

I do not consider there is any obligation on them to do this any more. In fact the agreement made between UKAEA and its staff that lead to the formation of HLRA in 1946, only applied to staff from UKAEA. Today UKAEA staff represents only a small percentage of HLRA members.

As a "private members club" we are unable to receive external funding from any lottery bodies at all, and thus need to make strategic decisions with regard to maintaining both the facilities and the financial means of supporting them in the future.

The HLRA is increasingly being required to make a greater contribution to on-going running costs of the facilities. I genuinely fear for the future of some facilities within HLRA, including the HLRA Squash club, if campus funding is withdrawn to a significant degree. I also question whether the non-squash playing HLRA members would support a large increase in membership subscriptions to meet shortfalls in areas they did not use – the HLRA Squash Club is a classic example. If you consider that there was fierce resistance to raising one grass sport membership category by only 50p per month then you will understand the financial circumstances that HLRA operates in.

This proposed development offers the following:

- Protection of open space for at least 125 years. This supports at least 10 clubs and in excess of 700 users and 1,000s of sporting hours. This is linked to a new pavilion for all potential users that has been provided on this field.
- A reduction in core costs to HLRA making it more sustainable in the future.
- An opportunity to open up facilities to a wider range of groups, particularly woman.
- An opportunity to provide a campus facility that will benefit the existing and growing local community.
- An opportunity to bring facilities up to modern standards, including taking full account of the Disability Access acts that are now in force.
- The hotel will provide a focal point for sports teams like rugby, football and cricket.
- Significant investment into sports & leisure at a key time.

I am convinced that if Sport England were exposed to all of the facts of HLRA then they may take a different view of things and be more supportive of the proposed development.

I do not agree that the needs of the few should dictate the requirements of the many.

ADDITIONAL CLAUSES

I support the proper and considered planning for the future provision of sports and leisure on the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus.

I do feel that the following should be given consideration as conditions of the go-ahead being given to construct the new hotel.

- Preferential rates for HLRA members for proposed leisure facilities.

In addition I request that the following is taken into consideration during the construction phase and post-construction phase.

- A mitigation plan for HLRA to operate successfully during the construction phase. This includes construction workers using facilities – this was an issue during construction of Diamond.
- A plan for parking for HLRA users of the Main Sports field during construction and post-construction.
- As near neighbours an open dialogue to resolve any issues.

It is my personal opinion that with regards to sports provision on the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus the proposed hotel provides the opportunity for the whole site to receive a welcome and appropriate investment in sport & leisure at a key time.

Yours sincerely

David Batt-Rawden

David Batt-Rawden

3/08/07.

**Chairman
Harwell Laboratories Recreational Association**

Attached: HLRA background, Tennis Letter from UKAEA.

HLRA BACKGROUND

The HLRA is a voluntary sporting and recreational club set up in 1946 to provide sporting and recreational activities to staff and their families working on the Harwell campus. It has around 1,000 members who enjoy around 20 different sports and recreational activities. The relationship between HLRA and campus has changed over the years. In 1946 the HLRA was comprised almost entirely of members from one organisation. Today there are members from almost every company on the Harwell and Chilton campus. Membership is open to those who actually work on the Harwell campus. There is an Associate scheme that draws in a small percentage of members from the local community into certain clubs but overall the HLRA is recognised externally, by sporting governing bodies and other bodies (lottery) as a closed private members club.

All of the facilities used by HLRA members are at the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus. These include an extensive area of open sports field, changing pavilions and the Squash Club and Tennis courts, (which would be impacted on by the proposed development).

HLRA members contribute to the upkeep of sporting facilities but the facilities are heavily subsidised by the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus as an asset to the site employers.

CLUBS AS OF JULY 2007

6-a-side Football, Archery (HARLEQUIN BOWMEN), Cricket
Croquet, Evening League Cricket, Football, Horticultural Society
Ladies Football, Rounder, Rugby, Running, Squash, Tennis, Ultimate Frisbee
Volleyball, Weight Training, Yoga.

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2nd August 2007

Dear David

HARWELL – PROPOSED HOTEL AND LEISURE DEVELOPMENT – PLANNING CONDITIONS

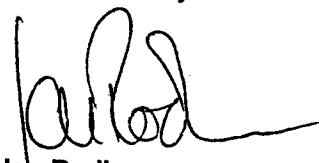
Further to our recent discussions I can confirm that should planning permission be granted for this development UKAEA would be content to accept a condition to the permission relating to the future provision of tennis courts should the area at North Gate currently used for tennis be required for other development. I understand that this, together with the resurfacing of the tennis courts that we have already undertaken, would satisfy the concerns of the Recreational Association tennis players over the current application.

The wording of the condition would have to be agreed with the planning authority but UKAEA would be content with:

"In the event that the current tennis courts adjacent to Eight Street and Curie Avenue at the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus are closed UKAEA will provide an equivalent amount of land elsewhere on the Campus and construct four tennis courts to an equivalent standard."

I will ensure that the planning authority are aware of our view on this matter.

Yours sincerely



Ian Rodham

Cc Dawn Russell

