

Appendix 2: Correspondence sent on 6 November to Cllrs Anderson and Carter by Dean Hardy – Treasurer of Temple Newsam Golf Course

We at Temple Newsam Golf Club would like to draw your attention to our deep misgivings about the 'Proposal for road-safety park, family cycle trails and new event space at Temple Newsam' which was approved by the Executive Board on 16 October.

We believe that the proposal that was presented to the Executive Board was flawed and was expected to be approved as a fait-accomplis. We base this assertion on several factors:

- The TNGC board was advised of the proposal on 30 September and told by a council official that 'the course would be closed by Christmas'
- The proposal was for the Chief Officer, Parks and Countryside to make the final decision on the matter, without further recourse to the Executive Board, even though his department was responsible for the idea and he was possibly the architect of the proposal.
- Even before the Executive Board considered the proposal, on 1st October council staff at Temple Newsam golf course were told that they would be either redeployed or offered the 'early leaving initiative'.
- In early October all but essential spending at the golf course was stopped.
- We have identified many misrepresentations and inaccuracies in the proposal which we have recently brought to the attention of the Director of Communities and Environment. We have not yet had a reply but attach the copy email below, and the attachment, for your further information.

We would be grateful if your Scrutiny Board would look at the way that this proposal was produced and presented and furthermore to ensure that the consultation to be undertaken is properly conducted and fair.

In support, we have looked at the documentation provided when Middleton Park golf course was the subject of a proposal to close 3 years ago and it presented a biased view which was very much in favour of closure. It also promised to "create Leeds' first park arboretum with a 42 hectares site containing interesting and diverse tree species" which never transpired and it is now the site of cycling facilities.

It is also noteworthy that the Middleton proposal contained very much more detailed financial information than in the Temple Newsam proposal.

One of our members has made a Freedom of Information request for further details, over 4 weeks ago, which has only been partly released at this stage and it is proving difficult to obtain necessary information.

We understand that your time is precious but we would appreciate your attention to this matter.

Kind Regards
Dean Hardy, Treasurer

pp C Brown, Chairman
Temple Newsam Golf Club Ltd
Dear Mr Rogers

Email Attachment 1: Concerns outlined in correspondence with the Director of Communities & Environment

We at Temple Newsam Golf Club (TNGC) have serious concerns that the Proposal for road-safety park, family cycle trails and new event space at Temple Newsam presented to Executive Board on 16 October was littered with misrepresentations and inaccuracies.

We were recently advised by our ward councillors that we should highlight these concerns to you and these are presented in red, below the appropriate section of the proposal as follows:

Summary

1. Main issues

☒ Reflecting a national decline in the number of people playing golf, user and income figures for golf at the Temple Newsam golf courses has steadily declined over the last decade. As a consequence, managing the golf course is now costing the council over £200k a year.

What evidence or research does the author have? There is no national decline in the number of people playing golf.

From the response to a Freedom of Information request we now consider that the figures quoted for financials are potentially inaccurate and misleading on at least two points:

- **It is apparent that the bulk of the expenditure, £239,100 on Horticultural Management, is an 'estimate and apportionment' without further support. It is also uncertain that this refers solely to costs of Temple Newsam golf.**
- **The figure for cost of staff at point of sale and management in the last Financial Year at Temple Newsam is over twice as much as that at Roundhay Park golf course despite having the same staffing requirements. Is this because all the management cost is being loaded onto Temple Newsam rather than being apportioned 50% to Roundhay.**

☒ To increase the popularity of the area for estate visitors and reduce costs, it is proposed that the section of Temple Newsam estate currently used for golf is transformed into a family cycling centre including road-safety park, family cycle trails and small BMX pump track that is managed and operated by the Temple Newsam estate team.

If some team members are being redeployed to this area then their costs should be taken into account in the financial impact statements

☒ It is also proposed that the potential to create an events space in the area is explored with the aim of increasing income from commercial events, whilst reducing the impact that some events can have on the estate visitor hub and local residents.

We would not disagree with this aim, however it should be stressed that this proposal does not explore the potential fully and nor does it cost the provision in any way.

☒ And lastly it's proposed that, where suitable, the area is landscaped to reflect its original, historic design (by famous landscape architect, Capability Brown) to complement the rest of the heritage estate and benefit local wildlife and the environment with significantly increased tree planting.

The great majority of the land now occupied by the golf course now was not part of Capability Brown's design, it was previously farmland and a deer park.

In fact the golf course itself has great heritage in the world of sport which could easily have been provided by TNGC

2. Best Council Plan Implications

☒ The proposals in this report will support the Best Council Plan, particularly the following priorities: Health and Wellbeing; Child Friendly City; Sustainable Infrastructure and Culture.

The Health and Wellbeing of the older members of society are being totally ignored in this proposal.

3. Resource Implications

☒ The net cost to the council of Temple Newsam golf course was £220k in the financial year 2018-19.

This is disputed, as detailed at point 1, Main Issues, above.

☒ The capital cost of the project described below which includes cycle trails, BMX pump-track, road-safety park, café, heritage landscape restoration and event space, is estimated at £1.35 million.

£1,350,000 is a great deal of money in the current financial climate

☒ Capital funding of £350k has already been set aside for the creation of a road safety park.

☒ It is proposed that the rest of the project is funded by prudential borrowing, offset against the savings made from the closure of the golf course.

No details are provided to support this proposal

☒ Once the scheme is in place, it is anticipated that the financial outcome will be a net contribution to the medium term financial plan of £60k per annum.

There is no detail provided anywhere in the proposal to support this figure, so where does it come from?

3. Main issues

3.3 The lease of the club house provides a modest rent to the Council of £12.5k per annum. The club house also has a residential steward who currently lives in a flat in the club house. The original lease term expired on 24th January 2014 but the lease has the benefit of a statutory right to a renewal lease; discussions have previously taken place to grant a renewal lease but have not been resolved.

Over at least 5 years TNGC have been discussing with Council to renew the lease but Council have never signed off to complete the process. Maybe this proposal shows that there was an ulterior motive in not completing the lease renewal?

3.4 The figures below demonstrate the decline in use of the golf courses at Temple Newsam in recent years, despite increased efforts to promote them. This decline reflects a national reduction in the number of people playing golf.

There has been little effort made by council to promote golf at Temple Newsam. Again erroneous reference is made to declining participation in golf nationally.

3.6 When income is set against costs, the net cost of Temple Newsam golf to the council was just over £220k in the 2018/19 period (which is representative of the costs for previous years).

The data is misrepresentative of the current position as it covers 8 years, during which time there have been many changes in municipal golf in Leeds including the loss of 2 golf courses, use of which was included in the season ticket, so that season tickets are less attractive to golfers.

If the last 3 years are considered there has been a 19% increase in income and a 26% increase in Net Position at Temple Newsam. For comparison Roundhay Park shows only 5% increase and 6% decrease in the same period.

It is also distorted because it excludes rental income paid by TNGC

3.8 With regards the impact of closing the course on golfers at Temple Newsam, there are over 30 other golf courses in the Leeds metropolitan district, many of which offer pay and play and/or season tickets comparable with those available at Temple Newsam.

There are only around 20 golf courses with LS postcodes.

Apart from the municipal course at Roundhay Park, NONE offer season tickets and their only alternative is a much more expensive membership package.

Pay and Play similar to Temple Newsam is only available, at restricted times and at a higher cost, at only 3 courses. None of these would be feasible using public transport

3.11 It is likely that developing such a scheme will result in a dramatic increase in the use of the historic landscape there, as well as providing a new visitor attraction for the local and wider community.

This is purely rhetoric, and a personal opinion, with no substantiation.

3.12 A similar transformation at the former Middleton Park golf course went from 6,873 pay and play golf sessions (+42 season tickets) in 2013/14 financial year to an estimated 300,000 rides on the cycle trails and 100,000 café customers (previously there wasn't a café at that location) in their first year of operating (2018). Additionally, the new bike hub at Middleton has proved to have many other benefits to the local community such as provision of healthy activities, a chance for children to learn how to cycle in safe environment, job opportunities and things for young people to do in their spare time.

These are estimates only, with no supporting facts and figures.

Even if this is true, there is very little comparison between the proposed facilities here and those at Middleton

Would like to see precise figures from Middleton???

3.13 Family cycle trails

3.14 The vision for Temple Newsam is slightly different to Middleton Bike Hub. The idea is to create cycling facilities for families and younger children to use, developing around 8km of trails (which will also be accessible for walkers), a bit like those you can find at Forestry Commission or CentreParks sites (see appendix 1 for a draft plan, and picture below), to take advantage of the large and beautiful landscape there. These trails would be in addition to (an linked to) the current 'Temple Trailway' which circumnavigates the whole 600 hectare estate.

It is not 'slightly' different it is completely different

3.22 Other visitor facilities

3.23 The facilities currently located at the site provide the perfect opportunity to develop the scheme - the clubhouse could be turned into a café with fantastic views, the shop could be used for bike hire and other buildings for storage of bikes, and perhaps even a classroom/workshop space. Toilets and car parking facilities are already available on site.

The idea of developing a café with fantastic views is welcomed. TNGC have been wanting this for some years, but without anything forthcoming from council.

3.24 It is proposed that the Road Safety Park is placed near the building in the picture overleaf which could be used as a community café.

The picture is of TNGC clubhouse and if developed the vision of a community café funded and run by 'existing in-house estate team' would be welcomed.

We know that catering facilities would increase the number of pay and play rounds as almost all visiting parties require catering before and after playing golf.

3.36 It is proposed that this area is landscaped to reflect the form designed by famous landscape designer Capability Brown in the late 18th century, and which includes meadows, woodland with rides, and views across the estate. This will add interest and educational value, make it more distinctive and complement the other fantastic heritage on the estate.

The great majority of the area used for the current golf course cannot be viewed from the House, and that land which is required could be handed back whilst still retaining the majority of the existing golf course

3.39 Restoring the heritage landscape, and making it more accessible to visitors, is consistent with the work of the Resilient Heritage project which has recently launched at Temple Newsam to help safeguard the historic aspects of the site for the long term. It will also boost a potential funding bid to the Heritage Lottery Community Fund for over £5 million to help restore and protect various aspects of the historic estate.

The disclosure of this funding bid is 'hidden' in the body of the proposal without any detail.

Is there an ulterior motive here? Is Parks department merely using finances as a cover up excuse to completely close the golf courses?

3.41 There is also an intention to ensure the landscape is made better for the environment as part of this scheme - providing a variety of habitats for wildlife, and opportunities for mitigating the impacts of climate change through significantly increased tree cover and more diverse vegetation such as grassland meadows and heathland.

Loss of trees and grass threatens the habitat of wildlife, including birds and deer which have recently been seen near the clubhouse where trees and grass would be lost.

3.42 The impact of the plans for the site will be a significant net increase in the number of trees there through a comprehensive tree planting scheme.

No detail is provided of how many mature trees would be removed. Unnecessary removal of mature trees and replacing with small saplings cannot be seen as a benefit to the environment

3.46 Financial considerations

3.47 The cost of proposed developments is estimated to be £1.35 million.

Description	Cost	£'000
BMX pump track		125
Road-safety park		350
Cycle Trails		300
Other landscape related costs	75	
Fees / project development		100
Building costs		400
Total		1,350

3.48 Capital funding of £350k has already been set aside for the creation of a road-safety park.

3.49 The 'spend to save' business plan for the project suggests that the remaining £1 million can effectively be funded by prudential borrowing, offset against the savings made by the closure of the golf course, and income from the café, retail, bike hire and commercial events. The facility will be managed and operated by the in-house (Leeds City Council) estate team.

This suggests that all the current costs of running the golf course will be saved. We believe that a substantial part of the costs referred to are, in fact, general management within Council which inflate the apparent savings that could be made and which would not be saved.

We have actual figures for golf course maintenance from private golf clubs and they are far less than the costs provided in this proposal supporting the view that there is bias and spin in the proposal presented to Executive Board.

3.51 Once the scheme is in place it is anticipated that the financial outcome will be a net contribution to the medium term financial plan of £60k per annum.

This is anticipation by the author, again with no substance or detail of how the net contribution will be achieved.

4.2.3 The proposed scheme will make the site more physically accessible – it will all be open to the general public (rather than golfers only) and involves the installation of new, wide cycling and walking routes for use by people of all abilities. Facilities will be available for children, teenagers and adults.

This is misleading, as the golf course is already widely used by the general public. and these proposals make no mention of increasing physical accessibility.

Also it notable excludes any mention of benefits for older people.

4.2.6 It is very likely that the changes will result in more people visiting the site, simply because the number of people using the golf course is currently so low, and golf is in decline locally and nationally. By contrast, off-road cycling and family visitor attractions have proved very popular in Leeds in recent years.

This is personal opinion of the author and rhetoric.

It is also biased and misleading as statements from England Golf (the relevant national authority on amateur golf) say that participation in golf is on the increase and support the fact that actually playing golf is an increasing pastime.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

4.3.1 The proposals in this document can make a contribution to the following Best Council Plan priorities:

4.3.2 Health and wellbeing through supporting healthy, physically active lifestyles through cycling and walking.

Older members of the local community need the golf course and golf club to maintain their physically active lifestyles. The health and wellbeing of these older people are being drastically reduced by this plan

4.3.8 Age friendly Leeds through making public spaces and buildings safe, clean and welcoming, and promoting opportunities for older people to be healthy, active and included.

This proposal is the opposite of Age Friendly.

This is an area that is being ignored. The safe, clean and welcoming facilities and the health opportunities for older people are actually being reduced.

4.4.2 By closing the golf course, it is estimated that a saving of £67k per annum can be made on maintaining the site less intensively.

Even if the figures are to be believed, is the ongoing cost included in all the figures quoted for future financials?

4.4.7 Once the scheme is in place it is anticipated that the financial outcome will be a net contribution to the medium term financial plan of £60k per annum.

Why are there no detailed financial figures to support this and similar assertions?

4.5.1 There is no legal obligation for the Council to provide municipal golf provision.

This is highlighted as fact, but it is biased as there would be no legal obligation to provide these type of cycling facilities.

5. Conclusions

Detailed comments are in the main body above, but brief conclusions are below.

5.1 Use of the golf course at Temple Newsam has been decreasing for several years reflecting a national decline in golf. As a consequence the golf course there is operating at a significant cost to the council.

There is no national decline in playing golf.

Over the last 3 years, pay and play rounds at Temple Newsam have increased by 50% and golf income has increased by 19%

Many leisure facilities provided by the Council will be operating at a 'loss' - some probably more significant than this golf course.

Whilst understanding the general need to be financially prudent, the golf course is funded by council tax payers and should be seen as a valuable local amenity rather than a money-making proposition.

5.3 Subject to the necessary planning approvals, developing a shop, café, bike hire and new events space as part of the scheme will generate an income to contribute to site maintenance costs

A community café will increase visitors to the golf course and will therefore generate an increased income from pay and play rounds

5.4 Restoring the landscape to reflect the original design will complement the rest of the heritage estate, improve the visitor experience and make the area better for the environment.

This conveniently ignores the fact that the great majority of the existing course was not included in the 'original designs'

6. Recommendations

6.2 (Subject to the outcomes of the consultation) For Executive Board to delegate the decision to close Temple Newsam golf course and develop the area for recreation, conservation and education as described to the Chief Officer, Parks and Countryside.

It was disappointing that this very important part of the proposal was well hidden in the proposal. Fortunately Executive Board agreed to override this recommendation but it highlights the subterfuge and misrepresentation throughout the proposal.

We would welcome any thoughts that you or your staff have on the above, before public consultation is undertaken.

Kind Regards

Dean Hardy
Treasurer, Temple Newsam Golf Club