

Halesworth Campus trustees were made aware of the following letter sent to Caroline Topping by Adrian Ramsay on October 3rd, 2025, in which he expressed reservations about our project. Our local County Councillor and two District Councillors were co-signatures. This was a few days before the cabinet meeting on the October 7th but a long time after the CIL working group, made up of politicians from all parties, had made the decision to recommend Campus be awarded the money. Halesworth Campus was dismayed to see the content of the letter, which had been written without discussing any of the concerns with our trustees, and has responded to Adrian Ramsay and Caroline Topping with the letter below on October 17th.



Councillor Caroline Topping
East Suffolk House
Riduna Park
Woodbridge
IP12 1RT

03 October 2025

Dear Councillor Topping,

As Halesworth's elected district councillors, county councillor and MP, we are writing to you about the CIL spending and Infrastructure Funding Statement which will be decided by your cabinet at a meeting on Tuesday 7th October. The report contains a recommendation to approve a top up bid for Halesworth Campus - Phase 1 (Sports Pitches). We have read the summary in Appendix A and are aware of the additional conditions agreed by the CIL Spending Working group.

We agree that improved sports facilities for Halesworth are important and support the aim of creating an all-weather training pitch.

Nevertheless, in granting substantial public funding the council needs to be confident that the specific proposals represent good value for money and will result in facilities that best meet the needs of the area and can be financially sustainable. In all these respects we believe there are significant questions about the proposal as it stands which remain outstanding:

- Halesworth Community Sports and Leisure (HCSL) is already running a variety of sports facilities locally and there has not recently been proper engagement between Halesworth Campus and HCSL over how to develop sports facilities in a way that makes the best overall use of their neighbouring pieces of land, including the potential for shared changing room, café and other facilities which are currently lacking in the proposals. As such the proposals for the sports provision in the town are currently being approached in a piecemeal way.
- It is unclear whether a 3G pitch of the proposed size is needed for the stated purposes of training for the rugby club and for the junior football teams.
- We do not believe that the implications for drainage from the site – in terms of flood risk and in terms of microplastic pollution – have been adequately considered.
- What toilet facilities would be available for people using the new pitches? It is essential that any sports development includes adequate toilet facilities for both men and women. Any project supported by the council should have these facilities, yet we understand there is no plan for this.

Member of Parliament for Waveney Valley
House of Commons
London

In our view, sports development in Halesworth needs to provide value for money and be able to support itself financially into the future so that provision can continue and it is essential that the project includes reliable sources of income. There are significant questions over how the new facilities will generate enough income to be self-sustaining, accounting for the maintenance requirements of a 3G pitch of this size.

As Halesworth's elected representatives, we want to see the best possible decisions made for advancing the town's sporting facilities in a way that ensure a wide offer to the local community which is sustainable for the long term. We ask that the cabinet defers a decision to make a further award of CIL money to the Halesworth Campus project until the project has been adequately scrutinised and the best options found which properly consider the needs of the community, the limitations of the site and the need for the project to be able to fund future maintenance.

Yours sincerely,

Adrian Ramsay MP (MP for Waveney Valley which includes Halesworth)

Councillor Annette Dunning (County Councillor for Halesworth)

Councillor Geoff Wakeling (District Councillor for Halesworth)

Councillor Beth Keys-Holloway (District Councillor for Halesworth)



17 October 2025

Dear Adrian Ramsay, Cllr Annette Dunning, Cllr Beth Key-Holloway, Cllr Geoff Wakeling.

Re: Response to letter dated 3 October sent to Cllr Caroline Topping concerning Halesworth Campus.

Halesworth Campus trustees met recently and, in the interest of achieving improved sports provision for Halesworth in the future, decided we needed to respond to the points you make in your letter of 3 October. One of our trustees, Dr Annette Abbott has been contacted by Adrian's office seeking further information.

We are of course delighted that ESC Cabinet meeting approved, unanimously, our request for further CIL funding. This recognises the enhanced specifications that have been demanded and the increased costs that have occurred since our Planning application was approved in 2022.

However, we were dismayed that our local political representatives appeared to try to undermine the sports provision, at this late stage, without even speaking to us directly. Cllr Dunning is of course a trustee of HCSL which has publicly made it clear they do not support our plans. We have chosen not to comment on HPFA/HCSL plans, whatever we may have thought of them. Cllr Wakeling did attend a Campus board meeting and expressed support for what we were trying to achieve so we were taken aback to see his name attached to the letter without him having made us aware of his misgivings.

Our focus will now be to work with ESC, the Rugby Club and the Football club, the main users of the pitches, to deliver our Phase 1 plans as soon as possible. This will be done through the pitches management group, to be established under the Community Use Agreement. We assume you are aware of the letters sent to ESC, by the two clubs. These strongly expressed their support and wish for the full size 3G and the grass pitch. Given the Football Club is on the board of HCSL we are somewhat confused by the different messages we are receiving from HCSL.

As importantly, we will be working, with others, on the development of plans for Phase 2, the much-needed sports centre that will provide for numerous other sports as well as the infrastructure for the pitches, e.g. café, changing facilities. We welcome the condition, set by ESC, that the charities should work together going forward. Given you state you agree that improved sports facilities for Halesworth are important we trust our political representatives will get behind us in this endeavour.

For you to feel confident in doing so we would like to comment, briefly, on the issues you raise in your letter, so you are aware of our position. We would hope you might seek to meet with us so we can expand further and overcome any misunderstandings or obstacles.

- **Working with HCSL to provide comprehensive provision** – From the time HCSL (then HPFA) pulled out of the merger talks, Campus has made it clear that working together was our preferred way forward. Involvement of the Chair of HCSL in the final selection panel for our new sports operator is just one example of our intent. In the last two years there have been a few meetings with a changing group of HCSL trustees to share information of our respective plans. These happened after the Campus planning application for Phase 1 was granted. Campus's focus had to be on delivering what had been agreed and was expected, including all the planning conditions, of which the Community Use Agreement was an essential part. These plans are based on a robust business plan, shared with ESC. Based on their own assumptions, HCSL did not think the plan was financially viable and therefore said they would not be a part of them but would work together on alternatives if Campus failed to progress Phase 1. Their view has subsequently turned into open opposition and attempts to undermine the provision of more sports facilities in the town. A sad situation and one we hope will change for the benefit of residents – the 'silent majority' who desperately want the facilities Campus aim to provide.
- **Drainage** – Campus have complied with all the planning requirements aimed at mitigating any risks of flooding and microplastic pollution.
- **Toilet facilities** – No demands were made for toilet facilities at the time of the planning approval for Phase 1. Phase 2 will provide the permanent facilities to support the outside pitches and indoor sports facilities. It has always been envisaged that temporary facilities may be needed in the interim. The 3G pitch will not be ready for use for over a year and in that time arrangements will be made. We are already in discussion with partners.

Campus will continue to communicate our progress through our website News page. We look forward to the facilitation ESC have suggested to bring the two charities together. Sports have changed and our community is changing so it is only right that we plan afresh for Phase 2 and the wider community benefit Campus has always envisioned, ensuring of course no overlap with HCSL's facilities. It would be good to know that our presently elected representatives will work with us on this.

Yours sincerely

Tony Goldson

Dr Annette Abbott

Les LeLean

Kitty Bocking

David Gallagher

Joyce Moseley

Simon Weeks