

# Mourne Observer

LARGEST SALES IN COUNTY DOWN

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DOWN EDITION

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62nd YEAR

£1

**Junior Prize Night at St Malachy's High School – PAGE 47**



**Annual Ballyward Vintage Rally – PAGE 49**



## Housing plan for old college site

By Claire McLaughlin

**THE site of the old further education college on Donard Street in Newcastle could be used for a new social housing scheme.**

The Oaklee Housing Association has expressed an interest in developing the site to provide accommodation for up to 59 people currently on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive waiting list.

The proposed scheme, designed for "general family needs", includes plans for 18 three person, two bedroom apartments and a three bedroom house for five people.

There would be two three storey blocks on the site, with nine apartments in each block.

Plans for the development have not yet been submitted but Oaklee Housing Association said it intends to do so in the near future.

If planning permission is granted it is anticipated that building work will commence in Spring 2012 and take



Newcastle's former technical college buildings, which could make way for a social housing scheme.

approximately 18 months to complete.

SDLP councillor Carmel O'Boyle has organised a public meeting with Oaklee Housing Association to discuss the scheme.

"While it is important that the old FE

college site is put to good use, and it is very unsightly at the minute, we need to examine Oaklee's plan very closely," said Cllr O'Boyle

"Many questions need to be addressed,

not least of which is the question of density on this site. The main thing is that the public should have an opportunity to discuss this scheme before it is submitted to the planners, in order to allow everyone to understand exactly what is being proposed."

Oaklee Housing Association has said it is committed to briefing and consulting with local communities on its new development and would be happy to answer any questions or address any issues which may be of concern.

Cllr O'Boyle is urging any residents wishing to air their views on the proposed scheme to attend the public meeting on Wednesday 26 October at 5pm in the Newcastle Centre.

Alliance Party councillor Patrick Clarke welcomed the regeneration of the site, which has been lying empty following the opening of the new South Eastern Regional College in June 2009.

But he questioned whether it was the right location for a social housing scheme.

"The site is close to bars, a taxi rank and many takeaway businesses and I'm not sure if the location is suited to this type of development." (to page 12)



'HINCH PUPILS GO ONLINE . . . Ballynahinch PS pupils Philip Leahy and Halle Lyons and school mascot Cyril the Squirrel announce the arrival of their new school website [www.bpschool.co.uk](http://www.bpschool.co.uk) on Friday. See story on page 5. Photo: Chris Halpin.

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