

CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL (PORTOBELLO PARK) BILL

OBJECTION 4 – P K WRAITH & F I WRAITH

We wish to object to the whole of the City of Edinburgh Council (Portobello Park) Bill, a bill promoted by the City of Edinburgh Council.

Using Portobello Park as the site of a new school will result in the loss of public open space, vital to the well-being of the community. The area was acquired by the Council as inalienable common-good land, as recognized by the recent court decision, and indeed by the wording of the bill itself. The suggestion that it can be taken over merely by the passage of a parliamentary bill to suit the Council's convenience cuts at the very definition of "inalienable". Such a bill will inevitably set a precedent for other councils to follow, whatever pious hopes the Council voices in putting the bill forward. Alternative brownfield sites are available, and would, indeed be in use by now had the Council adopted this choice originally, rather than pursuing the illegal alternative.

Loss of the park represents, inevitably, a loss in public amenity. That "the parks of a city are its lungs" is an old adage which has become more relevant as pressure on open space has increased. Recent studies have highlighted the positive correlation between open space and mental wellbeing. The park is well used by walkers taking fresh-air and exercise, and provides attractive views of the surrounding area and the Firth of Forth – the aesthetic component of the wellbeing open spaces provide is highly significant and important. Increased traffic in the area also contributes to the loss of amenity, particularly to those living nearby.

One aspect of the plan to build a school on this site is the increased danger to schoolchildren if a school is sited on the busy Milton Road, one of the main roads out of Edinburgh. Near the current school site chicanes and speed restrictions are in place and yet there is a danger of accidents as the school population comes out en mass at lunch time and at the end of the day.

For all these reasons we wish to see the proposed bill rejected.

14 June 2013