

CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL (PORTOBELLO PARK) BILL

OBJECTION 18 – ALAN AND SHEILA FLETCHER

Our letter is to express our objection to the entire Private Bill proposed by the City of Edinburgh Council.

Our objection to the Bill is as follows:-

1) This was a popular Park, where children could play safely because it was overlooked. Children could play impromptu games of football, practice cricket, rounders etc. Every Saturday and Sunday all three football pitches were fully in use with many parents and Grandparents watching their offspring. Dog walkers would exercise their dogs.

The Council removed the goal posts and dug up the park in 2006 thus rendering it unplayable and unusable. They then claimed that the number of people using the park was very small.

2) Initially the Council intended to build houses on the Golf Course, as well as using the rest of the park for the school.

Because of this proposal a large number of Portobello residents objected arguing that the park is inalienable common good land given to the residents 100 years ago. They argued as such the park could not be built on.

The council rejected this objection. As a result those who supported keeping the park set up a fund to fight the council and invited the council to test the viability of common good land in court.

The council refused. Eventually the park supporters challenged this refusal in the Inner House of the Court of Session.

Three senior judges presided and the Park supporters won their case

We strongly maintain that the Council should now accept the law of our land and build the new High School in one of the alternative brownfield sites.

3) In addition we also object to the continuing use of tax payers money to support the councils case, whilst objectors have to raise their own funds for their case. The fact that we achieved this shows the volume of support that the council deny we have.

4) Should the Scottish Government pass this private Bill in the Councils favour it would raise questions regarding the future use of common good land throughout Scotland.

5) Portobello generally feel very unfairly treated as a result of the survey conducted by the Council from December 2012 to January 2013. The council from the beginning encouraged all the High School and feeder primary school children to take

part and vote for the School. This effectively gave those in favour of building in the park extra votes to the disadvantage of the objectors. If this had taken part in a third world country it would have been denounced as undemocratic.

6) Throughout the whole process the Council has been determined to build on the park despite the very valid objections, and as a result has delayed the building of the school on a more appropriate site at considerable cost to the tax payer and the division of a previously very close community. As well as losing valuable green space such as was provided by Portobello Park the decision to build a school for 1400 or so pupils on the busy A1 road seems to have ignored the obvious safety aspects to the children. The traffic survey was apparently carried out when the schools were on holiday at a very quiet time of day.

7) In conclusion everyone in Portobello wishes to have a new secondary school.

Portobello can still have a lovely new School in the heart of the community, either on the original high school, or at Baileyfield. .

This whole issue as previously mentioned has divided Portobello and what is needed now is for the community to settle their differences and put every effort in to having the school built where it would be acceptable to all.

To lose the amenity of this green "lung" would be a sad loss to ourselves and future generations. The children should have both a school and the park.

8) I, Sheila Fletcher will be personally affected as I have fond memories of the park. My three boys used this park every day and at weekends played rounders, cricket and golf. When my husband was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease at a very early age, I knew I could let him take the dog into the Park in complete safety. Now I still go there to reminisce and also take my new generation of grandchildren. It is a place of peace and safety and as previously mentioned a green lung in a busy part of Portobello, away from the busy traffic on the A1.

I, Alan Fletcher, although only living in this area for the last 14 years, since I married Sheila when we both lost our spouses, often took the dog for a stroll in the park. I have also a personal interest, as my [REDACTED] was the landscape architect who was in charge of the design of the millennium planting. It has been interesting to watch the development of this feature over the years.

We both would miss the loss of the park, as we would any other park in Edinburgh, for example The Meadows, Leith Links, the Figgate Park etc.,

Once built on the Park would be lost for ever.

Before making a decision we would recommend that the committee involved visit our park, to see the lovely views of Arthur's seat the millennium planting, and the lovely views over to Fife.

9) It is our sincere hope that the Scottish parliament will uphold the ruling of the three High court judges and that the City of Edinburgh council is refused permission to build Portobello High School on the Common Good Land that is Portobello Park

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