

CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL (PORTOBELLO PARK) BILL

OBJECTION 22 – DR W R FRASER AND MRS A F A FRASER

This objection was signed by the objectors and reproduced in typed (electronic) form by the clerking team

We wish to make an objection to the Private Bill being introduced by the City of Edinburgh Council – City of Edinburgh Council (Portobello Park) Bill – to change the status of the said Park to permit the Council to appropriate it in order to build a new school thereon.

Our first reason for objecting is that the Park was given in 1898 by Sir James Miller to the Council as “inalienable common good land” and the disposition stipulated that it was “to be used exclusively as a public park and recreation ground for behoof of the community”. It also contained a condition against building on the Park, other than buildings consistent with the use of the land as a public park or recreation ground. This is certainly not consistent with the construction of a major secondary school on this green site.

Edinburgh Council have already been refused the required planning permission, and even at Appeal, three senior Court of Session judges ruled in 2012 that this was unlawful. For the Council to change the law to overturn this decision at the highest possible level is clearly wrong.

Furthermore, the Council has already identified more than one suitable brownfield site for a new school which would not involve building on public parkland which is common good land.

Our next objections are more personal and directly involve our quality of life and that of our family. Although we live mainly in Aberdeen, we also spend a lot of time at our flat in Edinburgh, helping with childcare for our two daughters in the city. We have spent many happy times in Portobello Park with the grandchildren, in all weathers. In winter we have gone sledging and made snowmen, and in summer have played on the grass, walked in the wooded paths and looked for wild flowers and squirrels etc. Despite its proximity to the busy A1, it really is a peaceful and uplifting place to be. Indeed on a recent visit on a sunny evening, the mature trees, wild flowers and birdsong combined to make me feel more as if I was in the countryside than in a busy city. This experience is definitely not the same as visiting one of the public recreation parks nearby – Portobello Park has a unique atmosphere and is used by many people from all over the city. We feel it would be completely wrong, and a great tragedy to destroy this, and no creation of a couple of compensatory all weather pitches could ever make up for the loss of this wonderful Park, which was after all given in perpetuity for the citizens to enjoy.

19 June 2013