

CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL (PORTOBELLO PARK) BILL

OBJECTION 43 – MRS R SUTHERLAND

As a resident of Park Avenue, I wish to object to the whole of the above Bill being promoted by City of Edinburgh Council. I object in the strongest terms to the Bill which aims to change the common good status of Portobello Park from inalienable to alienable common good, to allow the City of Edinburgh Council to appropriate the park for the purpose of building a replacement high school. I object to the City of Edinburgh Council attempting to use the Private Bill process to undermine the law which clearly states that they cannot appropriate inalienable common good land. The Council has identified at least two possible alternative sites for the school, so there is no justifiable case for using the park to build a school.

Green Space

If this Bill is successful it will result in a substantial loss of recreational assets in the immediate area. I will no longer have access to the green, open space that is Portobello Park. The loss of this Public Park and playing fields will result in the substantial reduction of recreational assets in the immediate area. This type of space with its variety of flexible uses is in extremely short supply in the area. In common with other local residents of all ages, I use this area for jogging, for walking and exercise, free of charge. However, over the past five years residents and users of the park have been concerned and disappointed by the Council's decision to remove facilities, football pitches and markings and the lack of even basic maintenance.

The whole area of Portobello Park, including the Golf Course, is of outstanding landscape value. The development of this space will result in local people, myself included, no longer having the use of this important local amenity. The access to the protected views to Arthur's Seat; the views from Milton Road down to the Firth of Forth will be severely limited.

Homes the length of Park Avenue overlook the mature community woodland that borders the park and Millennium planting with many mature trees and shrubs, which is a haven for wildlife and wild flowers. A numbers of these mature trees will be lost to accommodate the new school building.

Impact of the proposed building

The building of a school of this size (up to 1400 pupils) on the park will have significant detrimental impact on those living round the park. The proposed three/four storey building will obscure the views of Park Avenue residents, block light from, dominate and overshadow the surrounding two storey dwellings. The planned school buildings make no attempt to complement the existing architecture, leading to a detrimental effect on character and amenity of the area.

Traffic Issues

There will be a considerable increase in traffic. The school run brings 294 pupils (21%) of children to school every day. Park Avenue will be used as a

drop-off/collection point for pupils as the school plans make no facility for this and parking will not be possible in the bus lane running across the main entrance to the school. School buses will stop in Park Avenue to pick up pupils. However, the street is clearly not suitable bus parking. Cars, heavy goods vehicles and buses will use Park Avenue to access the side/rear entrance of the school. Park Avenue is a general access road and, in the southern section of Park Avenue from Park Lane to Milton Road, there is a need for residential parking on both sides of the road as only 5 of 25 properties have off street parking. Cars visiting properties on Duddingston Crescent also park in Park Avenue. With parking on both sides there is insufficient width for two-way traffic. The only provision in the school plan for parking is for teachers and a limited number of visitors. There is no provision for parents, evening class students or users of sports facilities. This will lead to further, increased congestion and confusion on adjoining streets which are not appropriate for traffic of this nature and will lead to accident risk to pupils and other road users. No road safety audit has been carried out to assess these hazards.

Consultation

The Council carried out a consultation on its proposal to take the private bill to parliament. This consultation process, and outcome is significantly flawed and I object to this being used to support the case for building on the park.

- Like other Park Avenue residents, I did not receive leaflets about the consultation from the Council until 5 weeks into the 8 week consultation process.
- The literature was misleading and biased towards the result the Council wished to achieve. This literature did not include details of the alternative sites being considered in their 'twin-track' approach.
- The literature states that this Bill will 'absolutely not' affect other parks and open spaces. I believe this Bill, if successful, will set a precedent that will impact other parks and open spaces with inalienable common good status. Many residents took this reassurance at face value and have been badly misled.
- The inclusion in the consultation material of the question asking what people want the replacement green space to be is irrelevant to a consultation on the Private Bill. It was clearly there to mislead and entice support for the Bill.
- There was confusion over who was eligible to vote, particularly around the involvement of children.
- The consultation was carried out in an area only slightly larger than that of the school and significant campaigning for yes votes was permitted in school playgrounds
- It is now widely presented that 76% voted in favour of the Bill. This is not an accurate representation of the situation. The actual percentage of the whole community who support this Bill is a significantly lower figure

Finally, should the Bill be successful, the land appropriated and the school built, contrary to the statements by the City of Edinburgh Council, the park will cease to be common good land. It would no longer be subject to the current restrictions, and, as long as they appropriated it for the purpose of their

education functions, the Council would be free to deal with the land in the future as they saw fit. They could redevelop it, appropriate it to a function other than education, or dispose of it.

I believe that, if successful, this will set a precedent and endanger inalienable common good land across Scotland.

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