

## **CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL (PORTOBELLO PARK) BILL**

### **LETTER FROM CONVENER TO PROMOTER SEEKING FURTHER CLARIFICATION ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES**

You will be aware that the City of Edinburgh Council (Portobello Park) Bill Committee heard oral evidence from Portobello Park Action Group (PPAG) and Portobello For A New School (PFANS) at its meeting on Wednesday 9 October.

Following that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Bill promoter seeking further clarification on a number of issues. These include:

- the height of the proposed school building
- access to the football pitches
- alternative approaches
- traffic management issues and planning permission

#### *Height of the proposed school building*

The Committee received correspondence on behalf of objectors following the site visit conducted on Friday 4 October. This correspondence has been posted on the Committee's web page and has already been forwarded to the Council. We would welcome clarification of the points raised in that correspondence in relation to the height of the proposed building, particularly regarding the properties on Park Avenue and Milton Road. It would be helpful to receive confirmation of the most appropriate reference point with regard these two roads.

#### *Access to the football pitches*

The Promoter's Memorandum (paragraph 63) states that the two new all weather pitches "could be available in the evenings and weekends all year round".

In oral evidence to the Committee on 11 September 2013, the promoter stated that the outdoor sports facilities "would be freely accessible to those in the local area" (Billy MacIntyre, Official Report, 11 September 2013, col 16) and "freely bookable by those in the local community" (Billy MacIntyre, Official Report, 11 September 2013, col 40).

The Committee would welcome clarification of how it is intended that these phrases are interpreted. Will access to the football pitches be free? If so, will this remain the case in the future, or is there a possibility that those wishing to access these pitches will be charged? How will any booking process be managed, and by whom?

Further clarification of precise times at which the facilities will be "accessible" to those wishing to make use of them would also be helpful, particularly factoring in school hours and term times. Does the promoter see any caveats to year-round evening and weekend availability?

It would also be helpful to the Committee to understand whether the promoter considers there to be any difference between "those in the local area" and "those in the local community". How has the promoter measured who falls into these categories? Does it relate to the properties that border the Park, or does it extend beyond this? Would the facilities be

freely accessible or bookable to those who do not meet any criteria which define the local area or community?

### *Alternative approaches*

The promoter has previously provided information on how it reached its decision to adopt the Private Bill approach. Iain Strachan in particular provided information on this at the evidence session on 11 September. We do however require to satisfy ourselves that the promoter gave due regard to the other options available to it and would therefore welcome any further information the promoter can provide in this regard. It would be helpful if the Council could advise what account it took of the contentious nature of this bill in comparison with previous (non-works) Private Bills in terms of timescales and, in particular, how it weighted this against timescales for public bills?

### *Traffic management issues and planning permission*

The Committee refers to the oral evidence provided by John Baker (Official Report, 11 September 2013, cols 45 and 46). In response to a question on the potential increase in traffic volume and noise disruption, and the Council's assessment of these issues, Mr Baker responded:

*"As part of the initial planning submission, a full transport assessment was carried out by specialist consultants to analyse the local road network. Since then, that has been revisited and updated with regard to the renewal of planning permission. As part of the planning process, a specific evening workshop was held with local residents to identify issues in relation to transport and the impact of changes to the road network.*

*A variety of issues were raised at the workshop, most of which had already been dealt with in the previous analysis. Those were explained in more detail, and the measures for putting in variable speed restrictions on the main roads and the introduction of other road safety measures around the area were included in the current planning submission.*

*There was, in addition, a new suggestion about one particular crossing at the north end of Hope Lane, which was raised directly by some of the local residents. The issue was taken away and examined in detail, and discussed with transportation colleagues in the highways department. They felt that no further measures were needed in relation to the issues that had been raised, and that the set of proposals that had been included were consistent with the necessary solutions for the area...*

*...We are confident in going into the planning application, and recognise that there are some points of detail on which there will be on-going discussion with the highways department."*

The Committee invites the promoter to expand on this evidence. It would be particularly useful to have sight of the current planning permission, highlighting variable speed restrictions and other road safety measures that were included after the initial planning submission and subsequent evening workshop.

Further information on the detailed examination and discussions "with transportation colleagues in the highways department" in relation to the crossing at the north end of Hope Lane would be helpful, to allow the Committee to understand the process for determining that no further measures were needed.

*Other issues*

The Committee has asked its officials to gather information on Field in Trust status and to contact Edinburgh Leisure in relation to usage of the Park prior to it being mooted as a possible site for the new high school. If the promoter can assist in providing information in these areas, then that would be welcomed.

It would be helpful if the response to these queries could be sent to the Clerks to the Committee at the address provided no later than Wednesday 6 November.

Yours sincerely

Siobhan McMahon MSP  
Convener  
11 October 2013