

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

### **Correspondence from Alison Connelly (objectors' observer) following the Committee's site visit**

I am writing with regard to the site visit to Portobello Park and Portobello High School on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October.

As an observer I did not feel able to interrupt Mr McIntyre's tour at the time, but there are a couple of important points that I would like to raise to avoid any misunderstandings:

The first is to request clarification about the height of the proposed school building. Mr McIntyre informed the MSPs that the building height would be approximately the same height as the houses in the line of sight as we looked towards Park Avenue. It was my understanding from the planning documents that the height of the building would be to the apex of the houses on the south side of Milton Road – ie on the other side of the main road from the park, and considerably higher than the properties we could see on Park Avenue. As the council have already explained, the ground level falls away from the road, and the houses on Park Avenue are “down the hill”. Additionally, the new school building will be of a block design, with a flat roof, as opposed to a pitched roof like the surrounding properties, so in terms of mass will appear to be higher/bigger.

The second point is about the Figgate Park. Mr McIntyre told the MSPs that the park was a feature park, with no flat areas. This is not accurate, as the south east corner of the park, at the entrance from Hamilton Terrace is flat, and is the area used regularly by the primary school for school sports days, rounders games etc. There is also a flat grassy area at the other side of the pond close to the children's play park.

Prior to the visit to the Portobello High School site, I had assumed that it was on the agenda to allow MSPs to see the site in relation to consideration as an alternative school site, but Mr McIntyre explained that it was to demonstrate the area that would be allocated to the new park. I was concerned therefore that we were not taken through the back gate of the school to see the proximity to the Figgate Park, and indeed the nature of the space there. One of the key issues about converting the existing High School site to a park is that the council themselves have identified that it is not in the correct location to replace Portobello Park, particularly because of its proximity to the Figgate Park.

Also, as we have commented before, the replacement park is not written in to the bill, and therefore the bill as it stands will have no impact on whether or not a park is ever created on this site. I did mention my concern at the time of the meeting on Friday, but of course it was such a wet morning that I understand it was a bit too late to start extending the tour.

I would be very grateful if these matters could be brought to the attention of the Bill Committee, and if possible clarification sought from Edinburgh Council as to the actual height of the school building.

7 October 2013