

CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL (PORTOBELLO PARK) BILL COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION STAGE

Promoter to Convener in response to group 2 comments on mitigation

Jennifer Peters, lead objector for Group 2, has submitted a document on behalf of Group 2 dated 6 May 2014 which purports to respond to the Council's questions on potential mitigation measures.

However, the submission is clear that Group 2's position is, as they have stated before, that the only option they would support would be an abandoning of the proposal to use the Park for educational purposes (albeit now with an additional requirement of "*improv[ing] the sporting facilities available*" at the Park, which would form no part of the fall-back option for the school if the Bill is not enacted but which would in fact be a consequence of the Council's proposal given the superiority of the proposed new all-weather pitches over the existing grass pitches).

The submission does, however, suggest that an alternative option to appropriating all of Portobello Park for the new High School would be to appropriate a smaller area for a new St John's RC Primary School ("St John's") and to rebuild Portobello High School on the existing combined site of both schools. It suggests that "*it is ideas like this that clearly should have been identified by CEC and highlighted to the community before or at the consultation stage. They chose not to.*"

On that latter point, the Committee may wish to note that relocating St John's to Portobello Park was in fact one of the options considered as part of the statutory consultations in 2006 on rebuilding / relocating Portobello High School and/or St John's. The relevant report is available [here](#).

Otherwise, the Council does not wish to dwell on issues on which the Committee has already received significant evidence. However, we believe it is necessary to point out that the submission suggests that Group 2 have fundamentally misunderstood the role St John's plays in the wider project.

The relocation of St John's is in fact part of the only fall-back option remaining to the Council if the new Portobello High School cannot be built on the Park (which, as the Committee will by now be well aware, is a phased re-build on the existing combined site of both schools).

The logic of Group 2's submission nevertheless implies that they believe a phased rebuild is not favoured by the Council because there would not be a suitable alternative site of the size St John's requires. However, if the Bill does not proceed, there are sites other than the Park that could be used for St John's. The disruption of relocating St John's is one of the reasons why a phased rebuild of the High School on the existing combined site would be inferior to siting it on the Park, but it is far from the only or even the most important reason (the Council has explained the various reasons exhaustively in both written and oral evidence). In any event, that disruption would arise regardless of where the new St John's RC Primary School was constructed. Relocating St John's to the Park would therefore in no way be a condition of proceeding with a phased rebuild of the High School on the existing combined site, nor make that option any more attractive. It is therefore unclear why the Group 2 objectors believe their suggestion would be an improvement on the present position.

It is, however, notable that the suggestion seems in any event entirely contrary to the view expressed earlier in Group 2's submission that it would be "illegal and wrong for the community, long term, to develop Common Good Land by way of a private bill".

We hope that this additional information will be of some assistance to the Committee, but please do let us know if we can provide any further information

15 May 2014