



EYNSHAM PARISH COUNCIL

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Notes from a public consultation event re Wytham View Play area held on Monday 12 October at 7.30pm in the Bartholomew Primary School.

Present –36 members of the public from properties adjacent to the play area.

Eynsham Parish Council play area committee - Mr Rossiter – Chair of meeting, Mrs Beavis, Ms Osborne, Mrs Piálek, Mrs Sheppard, Mr Collett & Ms Dickinson.

Mr Andrews – Eynsham Parish Council & WODC District Councillor

Mr Mathew – OCC County Councillor

Mr Watkins – OCC Pathfinder Manager

Mrs Lee – Parish Clerk

The Chair advised the meeting of the consultation process to date with regard to the play area redevelopment - details in every parish newsletter – The Echo – since March 2009, questionnaires, Play Day and the Open event on 5 September.

He advised that Oxfordshire Playing Field Association (OPFA) had made the following recommendations with regard to the initial plans that were prepared for consultation–

- To retain the fence along the eastern boundary of the site and retain the football in its current position
- To remove the planned zip wire
- To revisit the siting of equipment to move it as far as possible from neighbouring properties.

Roger Davis of OPFA had drawn up a suggested plan for the site in order to broaden the appeal and update the current equipment which was distributed to all and discussed.

Questions were asked –

Did the meeting point have a roof?

It was confirmed that the details would be in the next set of plans that the proposed contractor would draw up for discussion.

How had the area grown to be able to include all this equipment?

It was confirmed that the site was as existing and no additional space was being used.

The concern over anti social behaviour was discussed and the importance of all incidents being reported to the police was stressed as at present their records did not indicate that the play area was a hot spot in the village. The meeting was advised that a daily inspection of all PC play areas takes place for damage etc. Requests were made that the play area should be locked at night to prevent access – the Chair advised that this had been discussed with OPFA and they had advised that if people wanted to get in they still would and that the

locking of the area nightly would be costly. A resident expressed the view that a large part of the criticism of the scheme was that no one was prepared to confront youth disobedience. A sign was suggested stating no drinking in public and advising that the area would be closed at night. The residents felt that this area was a magnet for anti social behaviour and by putting play equipment around the trees/shrubs this would escalate.

The Council agreed to investigate further other local councils who do lock up their play areas and ascertain the costs involved.

Some residents felt that moving the gate further along the eastern boundary would encourage young people into the centre of Dovehouse Close which would create an increased problem with arson etc in the wooded area. It was felt better to leave the gate in its current location or have no gate at all.

Several residents felt that it was inappropriate to have any activity on this end of the site. The meeting was advised that the police had requested that a lot of the undergrowth under the trees be cleared to give a better sight line and deter anti-social behaviour – some residents felt that the children enjoyed playing in this area and it would be a shame to clear away the undergrowth.

An example was given by a resident as to how an area of Beech Road had been improved and cut down on the previous vandalism on site.

Residents advised that users felt concerned when using the site due to teenagers swearing etc. The need to alert the police to all problems was again highlighted so that they are aware of the problems. The money already spent on vandalism on site was requested and the meeting was advised the repairs were mainly to the chain link fencing – the bins had not been replaced due to the planned redevelopment of the site. It was questioned if new equipment should be put in before the existing had been sorted.

The need to change the traditional use of the area was questioned and it was felt that equipment for older children should be located in a play area nearer the Secondary school. It was advised that Playbuilder is for 8-13 year olds and Mr Watkins advised that older children are often disruptive on play areas as there is nothing to engage them – the addition of more appropriate equipment can lead to fewer problems on site. A lack of investment in facilities can lead to a spiral of decline leading to vandalism and investing in outdoor play can break this cycle and lead to more respect in the community. Sites not invested in tend to be those more vandalised. He also advised there was no requirement from OCC for the site to be open 24 hours a day the condition is for the site to be open for a reasonable number of hours. In addition there are no restrictions with regard to how the site evolves in the future – equipment can be changed, removed, added etc.

The revised location of the junior MPU had been chosen as there would no line of sight from the platforms etc into the gardens of Dovehouse Close. Issues were raised as to residents' right to a quality of life and privacy and the Chair advised that the Environment Health Officer at WODC – Clive Salisbury was aware of the proposed developments and would be happy to talk to residents. Several residents were concerned re the area getting a bad reputation and this affecting their property values and wanted to know what the council

would do if this was the case. Several residents stated that they would like to see the toddler area redeveloped but not have the addition of equipment for older children.

A resident requested that a substantial part of the grant be retained for maintenance and was informed that the grant was a capital grant and had to be used for equipment and the Council would then be responsible for all aspects of maintenance. The Playbuilder grant monies must be spent by 31.3.10.

A resident advised of the duty to inform, consult and involve under the Local Government Act 2009. He advised that the Dovehouse Supporters planned to form a steering group which would meet with the play area committee to work towards a solution to the issues raised. All members were invited to the next play area committee meeting on Tuesday 20 October at 6.30pm in the Bartholomew Room.

The Council advised that they had changed the original plans very significantly as a result of local feeling on the original plans. They would investigate the locking of the play area as discussed and look at ways in which the plans can meet the residents' requests – however the PC's duty is to the village and a balanced view of what is needed in the village is required.

The meeting finished at 9.05pm.