

Title :	Petition – Housing PFI Scheme – Use of Council owned land
Portfolio Holder:	Finance and Policy Portfolio Holder
Reporting Officer:	Nicola Mathiason, Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Purpose

To report receipt of a petition with 115 signatories.

Background

The petition relates to the Council's Housing Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and in particular, the Council owned development sites identified for the PFI scheme.

The petition states:

'We are writing to object about the PFI building planned for the Queensway recreation ground. Our objections are:

1. This plan is contrary to policy R2 which says that development will NOT be permitted on recreational land. We believe Meksham has voted against building on their play area based on policies R2, H1, R2/3, C15, C31a, C38 and T10. We feel their policies also apply to the Queensway recreation area. So we feel refusal should apply for the Queensway recreation ground.
2. This will be a loss of a children's play and 'kick about' area, which is greatly used by local people and also residents of Rock Lane, Highbury Park, St. John's Road, Woodcock Gardens and surrounding areas. This recreation ground is vehicle free, which makes it very safe – one of the safest locally. It is also a very peaceful play area. Once lost it can never be regained. Also the children would gravitate to the out-of-bounds school playing fields.
3. This recreation park was originally a brick works/quarry and is also landfill. It was given to the people of Queensway by the farmer, Mr. Basley, who owned the field. One area – the bottom corner – also floods, not causing a problem for the play area, but would, we think, cause further problems for building on.
4. This application has been put under recreation ground Rock Lane. It has never been known as Rock Lane but always as Queensway recreation ground. Why change it now?
5. We understand this application is for outline permission, not full permission to build. So as it is only an outline they will be able to change the plans before it becomes full permission to build. This strengthens the case against this application.

6. Additional housing on Queensway recreation ground would make the proposed Hillside cul-de-sac dangerously larger, the access onto Boreham Road already risky.
7. On page 4 of the booklet on the Council Tax regarding recreation we are told, quote:

“Better access to recreation

Our aim – to provide a wide range of well-planned and managed leisure and recreational opportunities that meet residents’ needs and return high levels of customer satisfaction.

We have three primary objectives for this area:

- *Understand and address the district’s leisure and recreational needs.*
- *Increase the number of people who are regularly physically active.*
- *Improve and maintain high customer satisfaction with sport/leisure facilities, parks and open spaces, and cultural activities.*

**To achieve these, we have done the following:*

- *Carried out a detailed leisure and recreation needs assessment”*

If the latter has really been done, and with the government’s concerns over child-obesity, it should be abundantly clear that taking away a well-utilized play area, while increasing the local population level – we refer to the Hillside planned development – the planned building on Queensway recreational ground would be totally against the government and local authority’s stated aims.

We appreciate your taking the time to read our views, and sincerely hope that they will be taken into consideration when there is a vote on the planned building on Queensway recreation ground, which vote we fervently hope will be ‘against’ the plans to build there.’

Options

As this petition does not refer to a matter before the Council, the Constitution states that it shall be referred without debate to the appropriate Committee, the Cabinet or Portfolio Holder.

As this matter has been considered extensively (by Cabinet, Scrutiny Committee and special Council) it is not felt appropriate to refer it to a Committee, but instead to refer it to the Portfolio Holder.

Background Papers

Petition received

Recommendation

That the petition be referred to the Finance and Policy Portfolio Holder for noting.