

Parklands Residents' Association

Vice Chair
Simon Hegarty
49 Aintree Road
Northampton
NN3 6EA

Chair
Brian Cooper
33 Stowe Walk
Northampton
NN3 6EE

Secretary
Wendy Cooper
33 Stowe Walk
Northampton
NN3 6EE

Adrian Arnold
Head of Development Control
West Northamptonshire Development Corporation
NORTHAMPTON

30 April 2007

Dear Mr Arnold

Response to the Public Consultation on Planning Application WNDC/2006/0154

We are writing further to our letter of January 2007, and in response to the revised recommendations of Sport England. As we have stated since the outset, residents understand that something must be done with the site if it is no longer needed for educational purposes. What we remain firmly against is the summary disposal of the playing fields, and the development of new houses on an estate that does not have the basic infrastructure to support population growth.

i) Summary disposal of the playing fields

We wrote to you in January in response to political pressure being brought to bear by Northamptonshire County Council. We felt that NCC were holding the future of our children hostage with the often repeated argument that "Obtaining the full development value from these sites has always been necessary to finance the new schools".

Through analysis of public documents, we have long maintained that this is not the case. You may be aware that our analysis has been borne out by the recent disposal of the sites for £90m - £25m in excess of NCC's publicly stated commitment to the PFI agreement. NCC have previously stated

"Should there be any money remaining from the sale of the sites, having met all the costs of the PFI, Section 77 compliance, and other school build across the town as a result of the re-organisation, then it would be for the County Council Cabinet to decide how this surplus money should be spent. "

As we reported to you in our last letter, it is clearly the intention of NCC to use this surplus to offset the budgetary deficit they are currently experiencing. They appear to care little about what is best for Northampton.

One example of this short sightedness – at a recent meeting attended by Steven Kelly, representatives of St Gregory's school explained how their pleas for playing fields from the neighbouring St Mary's school had been turned down by NCC. This was in spite of the fact that they playing field area at St Gregory's school is, we are told, below the DfES minimum standards.

We have serious concerns regarding the motivation driving the disposal and development of the former school sites. We therefore reiterate our request that WNDC satisfy themselves as to the accuracy and completeness of the information provided by NCC, and their agents Atkins, before reaching any decision.

ii) Comments from Parklands Residents' Association regarding the revised recommendations of Sport England.

WNDC recently contacted the Parklands Residents' Association regarding the possible incorporation of playing fields on the former Parklands Middle school site, as recommended by Sport England in their letter of 19 March 2007. Appendix A contains a plan which aims to summarise the views of local residents in regard of the above. The reasoning behind this layout is described below.

Rear Access

You may be aware that the properties on Stowe Walk and Devon Way were originally all provided with rear access, shown on the deeds and on the plans of these properties. This right was preserved when the school was built many years later.

These properties are currently provided with rear access via the playing fields at Parklands Middle School, accessed via the gate on Goodwood Avenue (examples of this are shown in the photographs in Appendix B). This access must be maintained, regardless of any future development of the site.

Location of Playing Pitch

Residents felt strongly that the pitch should not be located on the Northern edge of the development. The main reason for this was based on the long history of youth nuisance and criminal activity where the fields are not overlooked (e.g. Bradlaugh Fields / Parklands Linear Park). Where residents currently have rear access, the constant traffic appears to deter would be trouble makers.

Additionally, the area along the western edge of the development frequently suffers from extensive localised flooding (examples of this are shown in the photographs in Appendix C). This flooding has been observed to be very slow to drain, typically taking several days to disappear. Residents felt that it would not be sensible to site a pitch in this area due to the reduction in overall availability (it is worth noting that there are currently no pitches located in this area).

It was felt that if a pitch were located between existing and new development there would be considerably less chance of it becoming a magnet for troublemakers or no-go area after dark.

Car Parking

There is a long history of insufficient parking in the vicinity of the Parklands playing fields, a situation that has long caused a great deal of inconvenience to local residents. This problem is so severe that it has led to the Police being called out on a number of occasions.

Clearly any new facility would only add to local congestion and parking demands at peak times, as a large proportion of pitch users are children who are driven to the site by their parents.

If Parklands were to accommodate an increased provision of public playing fields, residents felt strongly that any new playing pitch should be provided additional parking at least sufficient to support its use, and ideally to support the increased use of nearby pitches.

Changing Facilities

It was pointed out that the local playing fields support both male and female teams, and it was felt important that this was recognised. Following discussion, it was generally felt that the changing facilities should

- Provide male and female changing
- Be large enough to support activities on all local pitches
- Be located to provide easy access for everyone that might use it (including users of the existing pitches located to the East)
- Be fitted with a kitchen to provide hot drinks and snacks

Although local residents use both the playing fields and green open space, it was strongly felt that local organisations such as Parklands Tigers Football Club (PTFC) should have significant input into any proposed changing facility. Residents felt that PTFC chairman, Mark Seymour, would be only too happy to assist WNDC. His contact details are

Tel. 01604 519577

Mobile. 07860 460942

Email. mark.seymour@thespiritgroup.com

Representatives of our organisation would, of course, be willing to meet with any of your officers to discuss this further at any time, and copies of any correspondence referred to in this letter will be provided on request.

We have not yet received a formal response to our letter of 31 January 2007, and we would be grateful if you would inform us of the progress of the points that we raised. We would also be grateful if you would notify us when planning application WNDC/2006/0154 is to go before the committee, as we wish to speak at that meeting.

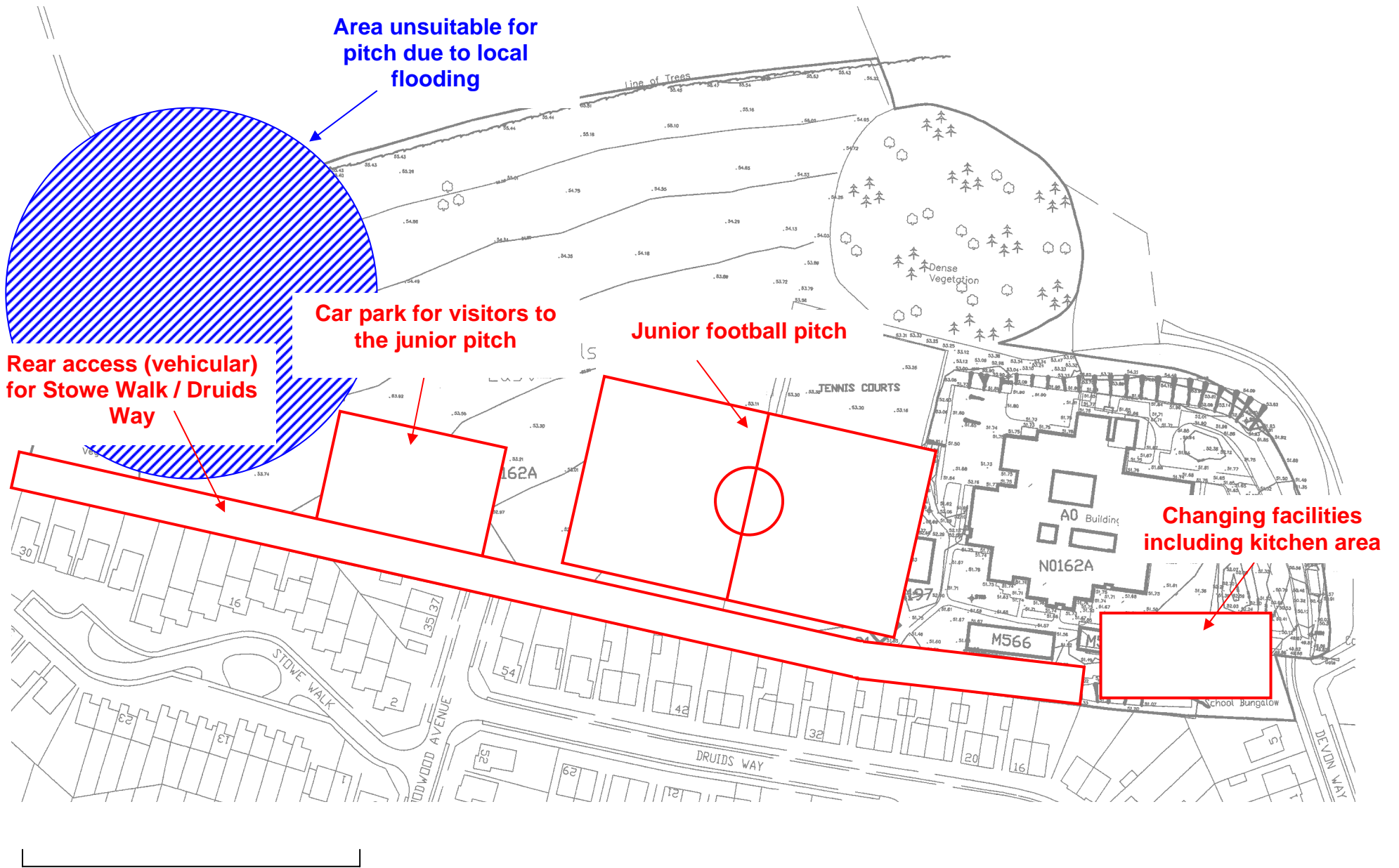
Yours sincerely

Simon Hegarty

Simon Hegarty
Vice Chair Parklands Residents' Association
For Parklands' residents

Enc –

Plan indicating resident's views of proposed future facilities
Photographs of rear access – Stowe Walk / Devon Way
Photographs of flooding on Parklands Middle School



Area unsuitable for pitch due to local flooding

Car park for visitors to the junior pitch

Junior football pitch

Rear access (vehicular) for Stowe Walk / Druids Way

Changing facilities including kitchen area

100 meters