



Item 63 (a)

Councillor Bridget Fishleigh
C/o Hove Town Hall
Norton Road
Hove

Geoff Raw
Chief Executive
Brighton & Hove City Council

Date: 28th September 2020
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Dear Geoff,

LOCAL CYCLING & WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

I am submitting the following letter under Council Procedure Rule 23.3 to be included on the agenda for the Policy & Resources Committee (P&R) meeting of 8th October 2020.

Re: Gingerbread Nursery in Saltdean Oval Park

This letter is to request that you vote against the extension of the lease for Gingerbread nursery at Saltdean Oval park. I am writing this before the officers' report is available.

My children both attended this nursery (under different ownership). It is approx. 200m from my home. I have no axe to grind and am reflecting the views of a large majority of residents in accordance with my brief.

This letter has been seen by Saltdean Residents' Association, the Saltdean Green Spaces Group and the three Labour councillors in East Saltdean. They are all in agreement with the objections outlined below.

Loss of Public Green Space

There are hundreds of flats in Saltdean with no gardens (279 at Grand Ocean alone).

In 2016 Development Control wrote "*Rottingdean Coastal Ward is not shown to have a clear surplus in open spaces. The Ward is indicated to have an open space deficit by 2030*".

This nursery would result in the loss of 400m² of the park. This is much needed flat land. Here is how the park is currently used:

- 35% steeply sloped with managed wildflower meadow - not usable for walking, games etc
- 10% - tennis and bowls courts
- 5% nurseries
- 10% playground and outdoor gym

- 5% trees and shrubs
- 35% flat ground suitable for picnics, ball games etc

COVID has shown us how much we need our open green spaces

I hope you agree that parks should be for people and not for-profit businesses.

Asset of Community Value

In 2017, The Saltdean Residents' Association registered the park as such to prevent future commercial development. BHCC both at legal and committee level accepted that there is a community interest in the park.

Restrictive Covenants on Saltdean Oval Land

When ownership of Oval Park passed from the Saltdean Estate to BHCC in the 1960s, the resulting covenant said: "*The purchasers will not use the lands and premises hereby conveyed or any part or parts thereof for any purposes other than the following...For public walks, pleasure grounds, parks, recreation grounds, open spaces, community centre facilities for recreation or physical training*".

Current Lease for this nursery

A new lease was granted on November 2017. Neither the ward councillors at the time, the Saltdean Residents' Association or Saltdean Green Spaces group were consulted. If they had been, then officers would be in no doubt about the wish for the land to be returned to much-needed public use.

The evolution of a nursery on this site

The existing terrapin structure that houses Gingerbread nursery was originally a temporary Doctor's surgery in a nearby car park. In 1987 it was dragged over to its current position by residents and given temporary planning permission to be used as a youth club.

It was never supposed to last this long or house a commercial business and be replaced by a permanent structure.

Grade II listed BHCC-owned building

Adjacent to the Gingerbread nursery lies Saltdean Barn, a Grade II listed building, which was restored in 2005 and houses Boomerang Nursery.

Maintenance of this building is expensive and a constant worry to the current leaseholders.

Boomerang has confirmed that it is operating at an average of 60% capacity.

If their business fails, then the building will return to BHCC as freeholders with very limited usage options i.e. not a retail unit, café or office.

Childcare capacity in Saltdean.

Here is an extract from an email of 10 January 2019 from Helen Beaumont, Early Years Consultant, Families, Children and Learning, BHHC:

Cont.

“... the data shows a high number of places in available for children in your ward (ie no need for extra childcare places”.

As you know. Rottingdean Coastal ward covers six very distinct and separate areas. We would not want to encourage any children living outside Saltdean to be transported to nurseries here.

Also, nurseries and child care provision in East Saltdean will not show up in these figures as East Saltdean is in LDC/ESCC.

My Baby Bunnies based in East Saltdean has confirmed that it abandoned plans to expand after Gingerbread got planning permission. This is because their research showed vacancies at the two other nurseries: Boomerang and St Nick's pre-school. Boomerang Kids nursery has confirmed that it is operating at an average of 60% capacity.

Alternative Usage for the Nursery Site

With 106 money available shortly, residents would like to see this area given over to a much-needed Multi-Use Games Area for younger children. Failing that, it is next to the playground so will be used for additional informal play and leisure activities

Loss of Rental Income to BHCC

West Saltdean will contribute £4.8million in council tax this financial year.

Thank you for reading this and listening to the residents of Saltdean.

Best wishes

Bridget Fishleigh

Brighton's Only Elected Independent Councillor

Representing people living and working in Sussex Square, Lewes Crescent, Eastern Road, Marine Drive, The Arundels, The Marina, Roedean, Ovingdean, Rottingdean and West Saltdean

