

(REVISED)

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 4TH SEPTEMBER 2007

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE -

11TH SEPTEMBER 2007

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE -

19TH SEPTEMBER 2007

EXECUTIVE - 1ST OCTOBER 2007

A report by the Director of Leisure and Amenity Services on behalf of officers concerned regarding proposals for recovering possession of the Woodfield Recreation Ground Site, SW17 (Lambeth) and planting it in similar fashion to Common land (with possible formal incorporation of some or all of the site) as part of a development agreement for an equivalent or smaller area of land adjacent to Tooting Triangle, SW17 (Bedford) which it is proposed should be developed as a five-a-side facility.

SUMMARY

The Woodfield Recreation Ground (WRG) whilst located in the London Borough of Lambeth is adjacent to Tooting Common and is owned and maintained by this Council. The Waldorf School currently leases part of the playing field site on which they have placed two prefabricated buildings used as classrooms and, under a separate rental agreement, they also rent a brick built building on site, which was formerly a sports pavilion.

Officers propose to seek expressions of interest for a five-a-side football facility to provide a series of up to 10 five-a-side all-weather surface football pitches on and adjacent to the all-weather surface in the Tooting Triangle, or other similar activity, which would support the five Council corporate objectives. In order for this proposal to be financially viable a small area of additional Common may be required to be incorporated into the project. This might be acceptable only if the land were replaced by another area of similar or larger size adjacent to the Common. A part of the development agreement would be to plant WRG with appropriate flora (whether or not in combination with the formal incorporation of part or the whole of the site in Common land) and also to provide a new playground close to the existing Tooting Triangle playground, which is in urgent need of replacement. Discussions with the Tooting Common Management Advisory Committee (MAC) will take place in due course and a further paper will be brought to Members explaining progress and developments.

The Executive is recommended to support the proposals for recovering

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possession of the WRG site and - subject to consideration of the outcome of consultation and the relevant legal process - planting it in keeping with the Common land (with possible formal incorporation of some or all of the site as Common land), in exchange for an equivalent or smaller part of the land adjoining the Tooting Triangle site with a view to developing it as a five-a-side football facility and to agree a proposal to seek options for replacement of the Tooting Playground as part of the proposed development.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees are asked to support the proposals in so far as they relate to their respective remits.

GLOSSARY

WRG - Woodfield Recreation Ground

MAC - Management Advisory Committee

1. **Recommendations.** The Overview and Scrutiny Committees are recommended to support the recommendations in paragraph 3 in so far as they relate to their respective remits.
2. If the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve any views, comments or additional recommendations on the report, these will be reported to the Executive for its consideration.
3. The Executive is recommended to:-
 - (a) agree not to renew the lease and rental agreement relating to use by Waldorf School of the land and buildings at the Woodfield Recreation Ground (WRG) Site;
 - (b) agree that the Council recovers full possession of the land and buildings at the WRG Site, on expiry of the current lease;
 - (c) agree in principle that an area of land not greater than the WRG Site adjacent to the Tooting Triangle all weather surface be used for five-a-side pitches as described in paragraph 14 below, subject to the WRG Site being planted in keeping with the adjacent Common land (and possibly being formally incorporated in part or whole as Common land);
 - (d) instruct officers to advance the tender and negotiation process so as to obtain cost proposals for the development of a five-a-side football facility on the expanded Tooting Triangle site, as set out in paragraph 15;
 - (e) agree the proposal to seek options for replacement of the Toddlers and Junior Playground as part of the proposed development, as set out in paragraph 15;
 - (e) initiate consultation with Tooting MAC on the proposals set out in this report;
 - (f) instruct officers to commence preparations for the statutory process which will be subject to consideration of the results of consultation and any necessary consents or decisions of the Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment and Rural

Affairs or otherwise, and which will involve public notice of the proposal to develop the land adjacent to Tooting Triangle all-weather surface for use/lease as a five-a-side football facility and (for the public's information) the proposal that the land at WRG Site be planted in keeping with Tooting Common and, if necessary, formally incorporated as part of the Common; and

- (g) note that there will be a report back on progress dealing with the results of the consultation with Tooting MAC, the outcome of the tender and negotiation process and contractors' proposals, what action is required regarding the statutory process, and the detailed timetable for the scheme.

4. **Background.** The WRG, Abbotswood Road, SW16, which is situated within the London Borough of Lambeth, adjacent to the western edge of Tooting Common, is owned and managed by this Council. Whilst the field is adjacent to Tooting Common it does not form a part of the Common. A full report on title was obtained some years ago, so it is not anticipated that there will be any restrictions on the title. A site plan is attached at Appendix 1.
5. The Waldorf School of South West London is now the longest surviving Steiner School in London. It offers a curriculum of all traditional subjects, which is enhanced by a wide range of arts and practical subjects. The school has developed and expanded during its 18 years at Woodfield and it offers a credible alternative to parents and pupils seeking something other than conventional education opportunities. Relations between the School and the Council have been good throughout their tenure and they appear to have been good neighbours, for the most part. The Council has maintained that the school should not be a permanent tenant at this site and the school has been told that the likelihood is they will have to seek alternative accommodation.
6. The Waldorf School of South West London has occupied a Council-owned, former sports pavilion and latterly an adjacent area of land, within this enclosed recreation ground since April 1986. The School's request was for use of the pavilion as temporary classrooms while they found new permanent facilities. Use of the pavilion is subject to an agreement with the Council, which generates annual income in the order of £3,000. Use of the adjacent area of land is the subject of a lease, which generates an annual income of £1,800.
7. In 1987, and again in 1992, Lambeth Council granted the school temporary planning permission for the erection of prefabricated "portakabin" style buildings to provide additional classroom facilities on the land leased from this Council.
8. In 1993, following successful discussions with representatives of the School, the Council granted a lease of the land for a period of 15 years, terminating on 16th April 2008. The lease is contracted out of the statutory rights to obtain a fresh lease when the present lease expires that a business tenant normally enjoys.
9. In 1998 the School submitted further planning applications to Lambeth Council: one to renew the permission for the temporary buildings and one to register the change of use of the pavilion from a sports pavilion to temporary classrooms. It has to be noted that there was some local opposition to these applications. However, Lambeth did grant the applications, through to 2008, to coincide with the termination of the lease on the land.

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10. In late June 2007 the School submitted further planning applications to Lambeth Council which have not yet been considered by the Lambeth Planning Committee.
11. **Current position**. Currently the school is operating on two sites; the former pavilion at Woodfield and church premises in Ribblesdale Road, SW17 (Furzedown). The school has been looking for alternative premises, which they have so far failed to find. They appear to take the view that the school cannot compete in the commercial market in their search for permanent facilities and believe that their only realistic option for the future is to stay at WRG.
12. This is the third time that the School has proposed re-developing the facilities. In 1997, they sought the Council's support for an extension into the roof of the former pavilion, to provide additional classroom space, and for the construction of a new, permanent building for a Kindergarten. Ultimately, they submitted a planning application, for the roof extension only, to Lambeth Council. This application was refused. In 2004 the two classroom portakabins were burnt down and planning permission was granted to erect replacement buildings.
13. The recreation ground is not large enough to support either football pitches or cricket tables suitable for adult use. Adult use pitches could be provided on the adjacent common field, and a maximum of two pitches could be supported from the pavilion. Extensive works would be required before that could happen. The pavilion has no heating or hot water system and no showers.
14. Officers have maintained the view that the School's use of the pavilion and the adjacent land is, and should be, temporary while they seek more appropriate and permanent facilities. The dilemma which officers had in previous years regarding what use could be found for the former sports pavilion should the school vacate the premises could be overcome if the site could be used in compensation for development of the Tooting Triangle site as a five-a-side football facility (involving possibly taking up an additional area of land adjacent to that site) - either through sympathetic planting in keeping with the adjacent Common or through a combination of sympathetic planting and formal incorporation of some or all of the site as Common land. The planting of suitable flora in this corner of the open space would enhance the overall biodiversity of the Common. Planting of this area (whether with or without formal incorporation of part or all of the site) would be offered as part of a development agreement "in exchange for" a parcel of Common land adjacent to the Tooting Triangle all-weather surface, should such an exchange prove necessary (it is not possible to be entirely certain at this stage what detailed package will be offered in advance of receiving contractors' proposals). This would enable a larger all-weather surface to be constructed, which would accommodate some 10 to 12 five-a-side pitches, which would be floodlit. Tooting Triangle is a part of Tooting Common and, as such, is Common land.
15. The Tooting Triangle buildings which were formally used as a youth club, would be replaced by modern changing rooms with showers, a refreshment area and offices to run a five-a-side football facility. The existing Toddlers and Junior playground which is beyond economic repair would need to be replaced. As part of the new development, the replacement of the playground will be incorporated. A further report will be made once the outcome of the tender and negotiation process is known and will include the financial implications to the Council of the proposed development. There is a consultation and legal process to be gone through, which may also require ministerial consent or other decision; and the Borough Solicitor will advise officers on the detailed process to be adopted. A further paper will be brought to

Members to update then on progress including options if any, and explain the next phase, if appropriate.

16. The Leisure and Amenity Services Department is not declaring this site as being surplus to the Department's requirement rather it is proposed that a "within Department" arrangement is made in which the Open Space alters from a cut grass playing field and recreational area to an area planted sympathetically with the adjoining Common land.
17. **Comments of the Property Audit Team and others.** The proposals and recommendations in this report have been considered corporately by the Chief Executive and Director of Administration, the Director of Finance, the Head of the Property Audit Team and other officers. On balance the property-related proposals are considered reasonable in relation to the Council's Asset Management Plan, the Community Strategy and the alternative options.
18. **Comments of the Director of Children's Services.** Whilst there is support for the principle of the improvement of the Tooting Triangle site, it is difficult to make detailed comments at this stage, as it is not yet known what effect the proposed development of the football facility will have on the playground areas, or on the One O'Clock Centre. If the proposal affects the land of either, then they would need to be re-provided elsewhere in the area. Refurbishment work is a priority on the playground and a judgement will be needed in the near future as to whether the existing facility is refurbished, if a long delay is likely before the outcome of negotiations is known, or whether an alternative site should be identified to enable a new playground to be developed, to ensure there is no loss of facilities to residents.
19. **Comments of the Borough Valuer and Estates Surveyor.** The lease of the land used for temporary classrooms is managed by Erinaceous, (formerly Dunlop Haywards), who report to the Borough Valuer and Estates Surveyor. The rent agreed with effect from 17th April 1993 was £1,000 per annum. This was subject to review every five years and now stands at £1,800. The lack of evidence of similar open market lettings combined with the tenant's reluctance to increase its outgoings makes it unlikely that a substantial increase on the current rent would be agreed, should the Council offer to grant a fresh tenancy after the current lease expires in 2008. As the lease is contracted out of the security of tenure provisions of Part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 as amended, the lease will expire at the end of the lease term in 2008. The financial costs of managing the letting and the associated calls on officer time would render a fresh letting of questionable net benefit to the Council.
20. **Comments of the Director of Finance.** The current income received by the Council in respect of the leases to the Waldorf School amounts to £4,800 per annum and it is not anticipated that any substantial increase would not be agreed. The non-renewal of the lease arrangement would result in the loss of this income which would need to be contained within existing revenue budgets. In not renewing the lease the Council could return this area to open common land in order to pursue a five-a-side development elsewhere within the Tooting Triangle. Should the potential five-a-side facility become a viable proposition, a further report, including financial implications, will be submitted to the Committee. There is currently no provision within the capital programme for the replacement of the playground or the relocation of the One o'clock centre.
21. **Conclusion.** It is proposed, in principle, that on expiry of the WRG lease to Waldorf School, and subject to compliance with due process, the Tooting Triangle site be developed into a five-a-side facility. A small parcel of additional Common land would be incorporated into the facility "in exchange for" the WRG being planted as Common land and possibly formally

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incorporated in part or whole in the Common land, should such an exchange prove necessary. The tender and negotiation process will also seeks offers from the contractors for replacement of the existing Toddlers and Junior playground. .

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P G BRENNAN
Director of Leisure and Amenity Services

31st August 2007

Background Papers

There are no background papers to this report.

All reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, regulatory and other committees, the Executive and the full Council can be viewed on the Council's website (www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov) unless the report was published before May 2001, in which case the committee secretary can supply it if required.



