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11 September 2011

Councillor Jeff Hanna
Chair, Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel
c/o Democracy Services
London Borough of Merton

By email

Dear Councillor Hanna

Dundonald Primary School – proposed extension/appropriation of Dundonald Recreation Ground

I refer to your letter to residents dated 5 September 2011 and the forthcoming meeting on 15 September. Unfortunately I am unable to attend the meeting in person and I hope, therefore, that you will accept these written comments instead.

Whilst I appreciate that the Council needs to provide school places for an increasing population and at the same time faces severe budgetary constraints, as a resident of the Dundonald area I am opposed to the proposal to appropriate part of the Recreation Ground for the permanent use of Dundonald Primary School and the erection of school buildings on the Recreation Ground.

I believe this proposal is wrong in principle as it contravenes the restrictive covenant put in place to prevent building on the Recreation Ground and the appropriation of the Recreation Ground to other purposes. I do not consider that the Council's proposal to vary the covenant in any way alters this principle.

Further, in my view each of the proposed building plans would have a very significant negative impact on the appearance of the Recreation Ground and consequently on the special historic character of the surrounding area. I realise that some may feel aesthetic concerns are not paramount, but they are in my view an important component of quality of life.

More mundane concerns include increased traffic, severe disruption to the Recreation Ground and local streets caused by construction of new buildings, loss to the community of some current facilities and lack of availability of "pavilion" facilities to the public during school hours.

I understand that a local campaign group has said it intends to take legal action against the Council should it attempt to build on the Recreation Ground or vary the covenant (as to which see www.protectdundonaldrec.org). It seems to me that given the strength of opposition to the Council's proposals by local residents (as to which see the Consultation Report to Cabinet), there must be a risk that the Council will end up in a protracted and expensive legal dispute if it pushes ahead with the proposals. I also fear such a dispute would also be divisive in the local area. I would prefer the Council to direct its limited resources to exploring alternative options for school provision in Wimbledon than to become involved in such a legal battle.

May I take the opportunity to thank you in advance for convening the above meeting and for your consideration of residents' views.

Yours sincerely



Susan Rosser