

Rutlish report Appendix 2

Representations in support of the proposed partial closure of the gates

- Alex Williamson, Headteacher, Rutlish School, 20 July 2016
- NASUWT (National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers), email from Helen Ryan, Local Association Secretary, Merton NASUWT, 21 June 2016
- Stephen Hammond, MP, 14 June 2016
- Merton Park Ward resident and parent governor at Rutlish School, 8 July 2016
- Email from local resident, parent of child at Rutlish School and member of staff at the school, 16 June 2016
- Statement from PC Bob Crouch, police officer based at Rutlish School, giving examples of incidents experienced, July 2016

Text of letter received from Alex Williamson, Headteacher, Rutlish School, 20 July 2016

Re: Rutlish School and John Innes Recreation ground consultation

I am the serving Headteacher at Rutlish School and firmly believe that in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our students and staff the John Innes Recreation public footpath should be closed during the school day while the school is in session.

This issue has been a concern for myself, and my two predecessors, who have tried and failed to have this issue addressed over a period of 20 years.

Following the recent spate of bomb hoaxes it became evident that the school is very exposed to entry by people who are not authorised to be on site (intruders). As a result, we have undergone a Safeguarding Review which included a Health & Safety assessment by an expert from the Metropolitan Police. The assessment report validates our view that the footpath needs to be closed during the school day to ensure the safety of our students and staff.

Since my arrival at Rutlish in 2007 my colleagues and I have had to confront and remove numerous intruders and unauthorised visitors to the site, many of whom have been aggressive and threatening both to students and staff. In more recent years we have employed a school based police officer who can also provide evidence of his involvement in similar incidents.

In conclusion, I can only state that in order to reduce the risk to both students and staff at Rutlish School, particularly in this current climate, the public footpath needs to be closed when the school is in session.

Email received from Helen Ryan, Local Association Secretary, Merton NASUWT

21st June 2016

To Whom it May Concern,

RE: Consultation on closure of John Innes footpath through Rutlish School

The NASUWT fully support the proposal to close this footpath during school hours in term time. We would firstly like to emphasise the evidence in the report produced by the Metropolitan police outlining the threat to staff and student wellbeing posed by the presence of the path. We are aware of previous occasions on which members of the union have been physically and verbally threatened as a result of members of the public being free to enter the school grounds.

The employer's duty of care under the *Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974* includes preventing violence at work. The failure of the council to close this footpath means that it leaves itself open to claims of criminal prosecution if employees at the school are subject to violence due to members of the public entering the school grounds via this route.

Furthermore, we are concerned about the safeguarding risks for students in maintaining the path through the school. Despite CCTV on the path and presence of staff to supervise its use at lesson changeovers, it is possible for unidentified adults to enter the school site during the school day and for students to leave the school site without staff always being aware that this has happened.

Given the importance of safeguarding students and protecting staff, we are astounded that the council has allowed the footpath to remain open until now. It is also to the credit of the school staff and pupils that no serious incidents have occurred so far.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Ryan
Local Association Secretary
Merton NASUWT

Letter received from Stephen Hammond MP, 14 June 2016

I am writing the regarding the consultation on the footpath through Rutlish School.

I would like to express my support for the proposal that the gates be closed between 8am and 5Spm, Monday to Friday during term time.

Last month I visited Rutlish School and I was astonished about the security issues that the path raises for the school and its pupils, especially following the bomb hoaxes earlier in the year. These concerns have also been set out by Ofsted and a report from the Police.

I believe the proposed plans provide a sensible balance between protecting the school, its students and staff, and giving easier access for local residents to the two local parks.

I would be grateful if my comments could be fed into the consultation process.
With best wishes,

Email received by Leader of the Council, 8 July 2016 from resident and parent governor at Rutlish School

Dear Stephen

I am writing to you as a resident of the borough, in Merton Park ward and a lifelong Labour Party member to ask for the support of the Labour Group on Merton Council. I am also a Parent-Governor of Rutlish School

There is currently a consultative exercise over proposals for a limited closure of the footpath that runs through the school site. This will conclude later this month with the August Cabinet meeting being asked to make a decision on the issue.

I would urge the Cabinet and Council to take the decision to partially close the footpath.

There may be some limited opposition from residents who feel the loss of amenity this would represent is unacceptable. However, I believe that the welfare of the students and school staff is of greater weight.

In summary, the arguments supporting closure are as follows;

- A fresh Police report into the site's security, with the inspector expressing great concern about the current arrangements.
- The demographics of the school population – 345 pupils live in Merton Park, and nearly 1200 pupils live in the borough as a whole. This is an issue that affects our community, not someone else's.
- The limited nature of the closure - it will only be during school hours on school days.
- The risk associated with unauthorised access to the school is very significant and would justify closure of the footpath on Safeguarding grounds alone.
- The school has proposed modifications to the existing path to minimise the already short distance residents would need to walk along Watery Lane should the footpath be closed.

I would be happy to expand upon any of the above points, but I trust you will appreciate the concerns of myself and many others on this issue. I do hope we can count on your support.

Kind regards

Email from local resident, parent of child at Rutlish School and member of staff at the school, 16 June 2016

Dear Sir/Madam,

As both a local resident, parent with a child at Rutlish School and a member of staff at the school, I would like to express my support for the proposal to close the footpath which runs through the school during school hours.

I feel that the safety of the children (and staff) of the school is more important than the minor inconvenience that might be caused to a few individuals who may use the crossing during the day. It is perfectly possible to walk around most of the park without crossing through the school and those who wish to access the playing field on Canon-Hill Lane can easily do so via adjoining streets.

I myself use the park for leisure purposes and I am happy to avoid using the footpath during the school day.

Thank you for consulting local opinion on this matter.

Yours Faithfully,

**Examples of Incidents Resulting From the Path Bisecting RUTLISH School,
Experienced by PC CROUCH 324VW**

1. In January 2016 a number of bomb hoaxes were received in schools across the following regions, West Midlands (6), London (4) and South West (4). A total of 14 incidents currently being investigated under the lead of the South West Counter Terrorism Intelligence Unit. This series is not believed to relate to terrorist activity and is believed to be malicious the CT network have taken on responsibility for co-ordinating the investigation under Operation TINWALD.

Although RUTLISH School itself was not in receipt of a bomb hoax, as the school, has unfettered public access, it caused consternation and concern, thus on the days in question the school path was shut until it could be determined, the threats were not of a terrorist nature, very disruptive to the whole school, and the security of the pupils, also as the path is always insecure, access can be sort at any time.

2. April 2016, a pupil involved in various ongoing acts of criminality , some very serious , escorted two other members of the public not at RULISH, onto the school site , to a class room , to confront another pupil , it is not known what for .The two other males not at this school , are known for some serious criminal offences , they were met on the school path and accessed the school by it .

3. April 2016 , was called by members of the Teaching staff for RR6 that an intruder was on premises refusing to leave , whilst waiting for his girlfriend to come out of the RR6 block , intercepted him , established his intentions escorted him from school site .

4. March 2016, I was called to confront a drunk parent who had walked into the school, looking to confront Teachers, about his perception of an ongoing pastoral situation .I discovered him walking through the school , hunting for the Teachers he felt had been involved , pacified him and escorted him from the school site .

5. March 2016 Identified a male was using the school car park, for commuting purposes to park and ride for the London Train.

6. September 2015, a pupil had his bike stolen by a member of the public who walked in the school and stole it from the bike rack.

Historically I have arrested people on site, for coming here to steal bikes, assault pupils and staff. We have had instances of angry parents who have a grievance with staff, hunting them through the premises, to challenge them about perceived incidents..

On a more regular basis, I stop and challenge members of the public on a daily basis, within the school site who have accessed the premises, by the path or any of the other unfettered entrances.

This can be for a variety of reasons.

Dog Walkers, looking for dogs, who routinely come in the premises due to the smell of food from canteen and bins.

Those who wish to use the school, as a cut through, from one of the other main roads that surround the school, it's a lot easier to walk through than round, and the path of least resistance is always preferable.

Parents who are looking for Teachers or pupils or both, as the school is so large , they are often looking for reception , but again as reception is one side of the premises , and parking the other , they park and walk through.

Other visitors, again parking is one side, reaction the other, thus any visitors to the school, park then walk around looking for where thy are supposed to go , which on a large site can often be quite hard to navigate thus they often end up where thy should not.

Members of other school communities, friends of pupils here, will come to meet others, and if they can't find them walk around the school, school site looking for them, and as the entrances have no lock or gate of viable barrier act on the presumption that it's quite ok to do so.

I find people on the premises , who have just wandered in form the path ,it isn't quite clear that they are walking into to a school , as if you walk down the path there are a number of exit options so there is no reason for them to presume they are choosing the wrong one.