



Friends of Tooting Common

29 September 2014

HCS Directorate
Wandsworth Borough Council

WBC proposals for Triangle Youth Centre & Redgra football pitch on Tooting Common

Dear Sir or Madam

1. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the WBC proposals for the Triangle Youth Centre and redgra football pitch on Tooting Common. We commented earlier with our main initial comments, in Simon Helmsley's email to you of 8 September, for the initial deadline. We are grateful for the extension of the deadline for comments, and this present note now sets out our comments more fully.

2.. On a general point: while the WBC proposals are for the development of the Triangle and football pitch site for usage on broadly similar lines to the present, the Friends of Tooting Common are aware of and sympathetic to the view of a substantial number of MAC members and members of the public who treasure this quiet corner of the Common and would prefer that, instead, the whole area be returned to grass, with increased biodiversity, so helping to enhance the distinctive character of Tooting Common. Should the Council decide to follow this alternative route, we would be happy with this. It is possible that we could help with fundraising for the money to return the area to grass, and we would be happy to explore this in discussion with the Council.

3. However, if the development goes ahead on the general lines envisaged in the Council's proposals, we have a number of comments as to how this will be done. Some of these are more general, others more specific points that we think should be incorporated as the project develops, and as WBC reviews bids from potential operators:

4. We would certainly strongly object to any proposal that was of the same scale and impact of the previous Goals-style football centre that was proposed in 2007-8, and we welcome the comments made so far by councillors and officers that similar proposals are definitely not under consideration.

5. In that connection, we think that it is very important that the development should not take up any more space than the existing site. We note that the proposals would in fact involve taking up more space than at present: we think this is not appropriate, and that the development should be scaled down to take up no more space than at present. We would support the possibility that, to do this, the site would be re-oriented, which would reduce the impact of the site on the rest of the Common.

6. We would object to any proposal that would cause any trees to be cut down.

7. It will be important to take account of the impact of the redeveloped site on the surrounding area of the common and on residents living nearby. Among other things floodlighting should be of a type that minimises impact on the surrounding area, and the floodlighting, and any use of pitches, should be finished by an appropriate time in the evening: we would suggest this be 9pm.

8. Similarly we would be concerned about the increase in traffic around the Emmanuel Road/Fernlea Road/Cavendish Road junction and the approach road to the first railway bridge. Given the narrowness of the railway bridge, and its heavy use by walkers and cyclists, any increase in traffic would make that part of the road potentially very unsafe. It is important that arrangements are considered to minimise the impact of increased traffic.

9. The new lease arrangements would also need to provide safeguards to avoid antisocial behaviour, and ensure the redeveloped site is a good neighbour to the surrounding area.

10. We also suggest that the new lease require that a publicly accessible toilet is provided by any future operator.

11. Given the lack of alternative in-house uses for the site, we agree with the council putting the lease of the building out to competitive tender, as it will hopefully attract a wide range of applicants, including those looking to increase the community usage of the building and pitch. We would be particularly keen to see a community-based operator take over the site, as they would be most likely to operate in sympathy with the character of Tooting Common.

12. We hope that the current operators of the building are able to put in a bid, but if they are not (or if they put in an unsuccessful bid), we hope that the Council are able to help them find an alternative venue, and they are able to continue operating elsewhere in the Borough. We would be glad to be kept informed on progress on this, and on the development of the new arrangements more generally.

13. It will be important that the public have the opportunity to comment on and influence the future use of the site, as the project develops. We think the Council should arrange for improved public consultation in subsequent stages of the development, and would ask the Council to commit to this.

14. We would ask that the points in paras 4-13 above are indeed taken forward, if the development goes ahead on the general lines envisaged in the Council's proposals.

15. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these proposals. We would be happy to discuss our comments with you.

Best wishes

Peter Ramell
Chair, Friends of Tooting Common

Circulated to:
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