

Dear Mr Blatch,

In your role as acting Chief executive, we would ask that you take time to look objectively at the car park and new toilets project proposed for North Lodge Park.

We, the committee of the Friends of North Lodge Park, have been clear and consistent on this matter: we are not against the principal of part of North Lodge Park being used for a car park, but are against these proposals: they are not complete so it is hard to judge them, they contain a number of poor design elements, they are counter to many local and national policies for the protection of open space, and they do nothing to enhance North Lodge Park.

Our approach has been to avoid open confrontation by raising our concerns with you and your teams rather than publicly, but unfortunately we have not been allowed to have any real dialogue and our issues have been rather defensively rejected.

We note that in this month's performance report for the Cabinet the project is given a green 'on target status'. It would be interesting to know what project plan, objectives, timescales and budget this is being assessed against.

Last week we wrote to Ms Nicola Baker, as head of Planning (copy attached), to remind her of her statutory duty to ensure that due probity prevails in the assessment of the application. Our legal advisers have also written on the same point, including "*if the local planning authority would as part of an application require a private applicant to submit further information then it must also provide such information as part of any application submitted by itself.*" We highlighted a number of points, from a much larger list, where it seems that due probity has not been followed and that the application is not been treated objectively. Our legal advisers think we have a very strong case for a legal challenge of this application which we would want to avoid as no-one wins from such a situation.

We are currently considering raising a formal complaint that any other developer would not have had their application validated without the necessary supporting documents and since then further information is now being haphazardly assembled after the consultation period

Another rather serious issue was brought to our attention this week, in that the necessary Car Park Order to enable the use of the old tennis courts as a pay and display car park was rather surreptitiously added to the Car Park Order to increase the parking charges across the coastal car parks earlier this year. However, the notices for the Car Park Order were not displayed around North Lodge Park, and there was no consultation of any persons or organisations likely to be affected by the Order for North Lodge Park. Therefore, the Car Park Order for North Lodge Park is invalid and will need to be reissued, wasting more public money. Within the background described above, sceptics in the community would question whether this really was a simple oversight. Further it raises a serious concern as to whether any of the Car Park Order is legal, and suggests that all the increased car park charges may need to be reversed.

I'm sure we would all rather sit round a table and discuss the Park in a positive way, and look for a win-win strategy that we can all support going forward. Please can I ask that during your time as acting Chief Executive, you take an objective view of these proposals, withdraw the current car park planning proposal and initiate a community project to develop a strategy for North Lodge Park that takes the community with it while delivering what the council needs to achieve.

Yours