

## RE: North Lodge Park car park and new toilets

Steve Blatch

Mon 10/3/2016 10:44 AM

To: Barry Meadows (barry.meadows@live.co.uk) <barry.meadows@live.co.uk>;

Cc: Cllr. John Rest <John.Rest@north-norfolk.gov.uk>; Cllr. Tom FitzPatrick <Tom.FitzPatrick@north-norfolk.gov.uk>; Cllr. John Lee <John.Lee@north-norfolk.gov.uk>; Cllr. Nigel Pearce <Nigel.Pearce@north-norfolk.gov.uk>; Cllr. Hilary Cox <Hilary.Cox@north-norfolk.gov.uk>; Cllr. Andreas Yiasimi <Andreas.Yiasimi@north-norfolk.gov.uk>; Duncan Ellis <Duncan.Ellis@north-norfolk.gov.uk>; Sue Lawson <Sue.Lawson@north-norfolk.gov.uk>; Nick Baker <Nick.Baker@north-norfolk.gov.uk>; Darryl Watson <Darryl.Watson@north-norfolk.gov.uk>; Sarah Ashurst <Sarah.Ashurst@north-norfolk.gov.uk>; Nicola Baker <Nicola.Baker@north-norfolk.gov.uk>;

Dear Barry

Thank you for your email below concerning the above, together with your emails of 12<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> September on the same matter detailing the Friends of North Lodge Park's thoughts / position on the proposed public car park and new public toilets; I apologise for the delay in providing you with a detailed response on behalf of the Council.

Responding first to the points raised in your email of 23<sup>rd</sup> September, I would comment as follows, using the order of the points raised in the mail:-

1. NNDC's corporate position, as owner of North Lodge Park and applicant for the car park / public toilet proposal, is that the proposed car park will bring positive benefit to the wider area of North Lodge Park through raising the profile of the Park by increasing levels of footfall through the Park and to the wider East End of the town and the East Promenade.

The issue of how revenue generated by any car park is spent or committed by the District Council is separate to the land use issues and is not a material consideration in the appraisal and determination of the planning application. Given the public interest in the proposal, NNDC, as a corporate body, is clear that the debate around the merits (or otherwise) of the proposal for a car park in North Lodge Park should not be clouded or influenced by how any monies generated by the car park should be spent; the District Council has responsibilities to council tax payers across North Norfolk and is unable to make commitments to any one community based upon any single proposal. The Council would however hope that through increasing the profile of the Park and the number of visitors to the area, that commercial opportunities to revive the Park through the introduction of new facilities and attractions might be realised and therefore support a wider revival / regeneration of the Park.

The proposal to establish a modest car park (48 spaces) on an already hard-surfaced area, which does not take in any "green" space, will in the Council's corporate view significantly enhance the appeal of the Park through improved accessibility and the provision of new and upgraded infrastructure. The proposals include new public toilet facilities, including accessible facilities not currently provided in the Park, as well as a detailed planting scheme which seeks to strengthen the existing screening of the proposed car park / area of existing hard surface, whilst at the same time, providing new planting to the wider benefit of the Park – i.e. along the pathway to the north of the proposed car park facing the North Lodge lawn and area towards the tea room.

The proposal represents a capital investment of some £200,000 by the District Council in North Lodge Park,

which the authority would hope would serve as a catalyst for further public and private sector investment in the East end of the town, including building upon investments proposed by the Friends of North Lodge Park, such as the children's play proposals which you are developing.

2. In promoting the car park proposal, NNDC has sought to respect local feelings about the importance of North Lodge Park as an area of public open space through developing a proposal on the area of existing (i.e. previously developed) hard-surfacing, which is considered to have less recreational and amenity value than the rest of the Park.

Further, the location of the area of hard-surfacing, immediately to the north of Overstrand Road, and well-screened from the rest of the Park means development of this area as a car park would not have any significant impact on the wider enjoyment of the Park.

It is without dispute that the area proposed for the car park has not been used for any formal purpose for many years. Further, in its present form the area of hard surfacing would not be considered suitable for children's play or for other recreational uses. The town already benefits from first-class public tennis facilities, supported by NNDC on Norwich Road; a Multi-Use Games Area facility provided by NNDC in partnership with the Cromer Academy alongside the Cromer Sports Centre facilities on the Cromer Academy site; and the skate park facility on The Meadow, developed over the past couple of years by a voluntary group, with significant matchfunding support from NNDC's Big Society Fund.

3. The points you raise under Point 3 of your message as they relate to policies contained within the adopted North Norfolk Local Plan and National Planning Policy Framework are all matters which will be considered in the appraisal of the planning application by the Planning Officer and subsequent consideration of the application by the Development Committee.

Historic England have been consulted on the proposed development and have expressed no objection in principle to the proposed car park; their comments can be viewed online.

4. You have commented at point 4 of your email that the application for the car park is not supported by a number of technical reports, which would be asked for by the Council, as local planning authority, in respect of other development proposals. NNDC has been advised in the submission of the car park proposal by local architects and planning agents, Stead Mutton Griggs of Sheringham, who are experienced in the submission of planning applications and discussed the proposal in advance of formal submission with officers from County Highways and assessed the scale and impact of the proposed development on heritage assets, trees and local fauna.

In discussing the proposed development with highway officers, I understand that no advice was provided to SMG that a Transport Assessment would be required. It is not believed that the modest scale of the proposal (48 spaces) will in itself generate additional traffic or vehicular movements within Cromer or the streets immediately adjoining North Lodge Park; but this is a matter which will be considered in the formal appraisal of the planning application upon which officers from the Highway Authority have been consulted as a statutory consultee.

Similarly, the District Council's Tree and Landscape Officers are formal consultees on the proposed development and will be able to request the submission of arboricultural and wildlife reports if they feel such matters need further consideration beyond the level of information provided in the submitted application. Corporately the Council considers that the removal of the existing non-porous hard surface may actually result in an improvement in the environment of the trees surrounding the proposed car park; but in any event tree protection measures can be conditioned if the Development Committee was minded to approve the planning application for the car park.

NNDC does not agree with your statement that the area of existing hard-standing is used as a waste transfer station. A small part of the site is used for the storage of some bulk waste bins which are used by the Council's street cleansing contract operatives to deposit street sweepings from cleansing of the town and promenade areas before their removal. This is an operational matter and is considered to be small-scale rather than defined as a waste transfer operation. In any event, this activity would cease if the car park proposal was to be approved. Similarly, the recent use of a small part of the hard-surfaced area as a builders compound has been permitted by the District Council to facilitate the builders undertaking significant works to the (privately owned) Watch House in the north-west corner of North Lodge Park. The improvement of this property will significantly enhance the environment of and enjoyment by visitors to the Park and the Council therefore believed that its agreement to accommodate the builders compound for the period of the works would provide a public benefit and be recognised as such by local people and the Friends.

In terms of the comments made regarding the need for a noise assessment, the Council does not understand this point. The area proposed for the public car park immediately adjoins Overstrand Road, which is a busy public highway carrying traffic eastwards away from the town centre. The modest scale of the proposed car park and its design / layout will not allow fast vehicle speeds which would generate noise. The Council does not believe that the existing Meadow or Cadogan Road public car parks which serve the town have any noise nuisance associated with their use which impacts negatively on nearby residential properties and is not clear why it is felt that this might be an issue at North Lodge Park.

5. There are then a number of more detailed points made at point 5 of your message, which are addressed below:-

The proposed car park is of modest scale and does not propose provision of dedicated motorcycle spaces. The proposed car park does however include 6 spaces for Blue Badge holders which is double the best practice guidance which I understand suggests that 6% of parking spaces in public car parks should be designated for people with a disability. The number of such spaces proposed was increased beyond the number originally proposed following informal consultation on the proposed car park with a number of organisations and internal discussion within the Council.

The design of the ramp to serve the public toilets has been discussed with Building Control and is understood to comply with building regulations, although this is a separate process to the determination of a planning application.

The car park is of a modest scale, with good visibility / slow vehicle speeds and is not considered to merit dedicated pedestrian routes. No other NNDC car parks have such provision.

It would be proposed that the pay and display machines are sited at each end of the central planting area; with signage and litter bins secured through condition if the planning application is approved.

The gridforce surface allow the display of arrows, signage and other markers on the surface of the car park.

A lighting scheme has been developed for the car park, involving low level LED lighting bollards, except for higher level PIR lighting on the front of the proposed toilet block. Details of the lighting scheme have been submitted to the Planning Team and will be uploaded to the case file next week.

Access for pedestrians from the proposed car park to Overstrand Road and the east end of Church Street will be possible from the car park via the existing North Lodge Park drive way, through the Park to The Gangway or through the car park entrance on to the pavement on the north side of Overstrand Road.

The District Council is aware of public interest in the proposed car park and of the arrangements made for a Parish Poll regarding the proposal which is to be held on 13<sup>th</sup> October.

Whilst we note the request of the Friends of North Lodge Park to meet with representatives of the District Council to discuss details of the proposed car park further, as the proposed development is currently the subject of a formal planning application and statutory consultation, we do not believe that it is appropriate to meet with any party to discuss the proposal outside of this process as to do so might be seen by some parties as compromising either the Friends or due process here at the District Council in the consideration of the planning application.

The District Council does however agree with your statement that the community should be properly informed about the proposal and in this respect agrees with much of the content of the statement you have placed on the Friends Facebook page on 28<sup>th</sup> September under the heading "Where will the money come from?"

However, the Council is concerned that some statements made by individuals on the Friends of North Lodge Park Facebook page (including from some people who are understood to be members of the Committee or certainly active Friends) regarding the car park proposal are incorrect. Such statements include:-

- those which suggest that it would be some 10 years before the District Council recovers the £200,000 investment which would be made in the Park by the car park and public toilets proposal. The District Council does not believe it has made any such statement or understand where this comment might originate from but would wish for people to understand the difference between the Council making a capital investment in the Park, which has the potential to generate income in the future, against ongoing annual revenue expenditure. The Council is having to take a more commercial approach to the management of its asset portfolio and the development of the car park proposal, if it receives planning approval, would see income generated for the Council which could support the delivery of council services in the future – including services and facilities provided in Cromer.
- Further, incorrect statements are made regarding the breakdown of talks between the District Council and Cromer Town Council a couple of years ago about the future management of the Park which misrepresent the position of the District Council.

I hope that in the comments made above I have addressed the points raised in your communications with the Council of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> September, but no doubt you will come back to me in writing if you have any further questions about the proposed development at this time.

Regards

Steve

**Steve Blatch**

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**From:** Barry Meadows [mailto:barry.meadows@live.co.uk]  
**Sent:** 30 September 2016 14:14  
**To:** Steve Blatch  
**Cc:** Cllr. John Rest; Cllr. John Lee  
**Subject:** North Lodge Park car park and new toilets

Hello

On 12th September, following NNDC's planning application for a car park and new public toilets in North Lodge Park, I wrote to you on behalf of the Friends of North Lodge Park committee outlining our concerns which you said you would raise with Cllr Rest.

After taking time to review the planning application in more detail I wrote to you with further detailed concerns on 23rd October.

A response to our concerns would be appreciated.

We have taken legal advice which confirms our view that there are material planning objections to the application which should be addressed before it is put to a planning decision; I repeat the request in my previous emails for the the application to be withdrawn and for a sensible dialogue to be had with the community.

The decision whether or not to create a new car park in North Lodge Park should not be taken lightly, it is a major change and the community needs full and accurate information on which to base a decision. The Friends committee is trying to take a balanced view on the debate, making sure the community are properly informed on the proposal and the issues. It is clear, in conversations we have with the community, that those who are willing to accept a new car park do so on the basis that revenues from the business are used to aid the future of the Park. However, there remains a significant proportion of the community who are against all moves to increase car parking in North Lodge Park.

Please could we meet to look at how we can work together to bring forward proposals for the future North Lodge Park that suit yourselves at NNDC and the community.

Regards

Barry Meadows  
Secretary, Friends of North Lodge Park