

Request for Review

We thank the Asset Transfer team for our constructive discussions and very much welcome the Asset Transfer overarching decision to lease the Children's Wood and North Kelvin Meadow for 25 years to our community group: The Children's Wood. Unfortunately however we are not in a position to accept the lease as it stands due to the clause pertaining to the council retaining part of the land for future school buildings. This clause makes the asset transfer meaningless in the mind of the community as it significantly undermines both current and future community initiatives on the land by handcuffing the land in the same uncertain state as before. The community will remain stressed about the future of the site. The application to lease the land was submitted to take away uncertainty this clause embeds further uncertainty. We ask for this clause to be removed, in which case we would be very happy to accept the lease offer.

After 20 years of continuous local community activity, culminating in countless actions, representations, petitions and two referrals of Glasgow City Council plans to the Scottish Government, the Government's Reporters, on both occasions, it was determined that the North Kelvin Meadow and Children's Wood should be designated as Open Space, with all the protections that that requires.

As a reminder the Reporter said as a result of the final public hearing on the matter:

"Its [NKM-CW] development would result in a deficit in the specific types of green infrastructure which the site accommodates, including play spaces, allotments and community growing spaces. The proposal, and the proposed mitigation, would therefore not be consistent with the policy, or with SPP..... I recommend that planning permission be refused."

The Scottish Ministers agreed with this decision and rejected the plans on the 21st December 2016 :

"Ministers have carefully considered the report. They accept and agree with the reporter's overall conclusions and recommendations and adopt them for the purpose of their own decision."

Accordingly, Ministers hereby dismiss the application and refuse planning permission for the erection of residential development with associated parking, landscaping and vehicular access and demolition of existing structures at Kelbourne Street/Sanda Street/Clouston Street, Glasgow."

The arguments made for retaining the NKM-CW as open space were based entirely on the Council's own excellent City Plan and its rules on open space provision and protection, in addition to the huge commitment of local people to create a local place worthy of their wider community and its children. The Council's City Plan and the actions of its own people have created a resource about which any council can be rightly proud, fitting perfectly with the current environmental and well-being agendas – and indeed a showcase opportunity for the upcoming COP26 event to be held in Glasgow in the autumn.

The logical next step for the Council and the local people is to find a way for the community activity to continue with confidence and without uncertainty, such that the wider vision for the NKM-CW to support all age ranges in society, not just young children, can be realised. Such confidence can be achieved by Asset Transfer, an aspect of the community empowerment that is now enshrined in Scottish legislation. On this basis, the NKM-CW board have made the necessary representations to the Council.

In response, you are proposing that such an asset transfer would only be possible if the Council are permitted to retain the right to build on a portion, of undisclosed size or siting, of the land for a new nursery building.

We welcome the asset transfer itself but we strongly object to the specific clause surrounding the right to built and we request this clause removed on the following grounds:

1. Two Scottish Government Reporters required that the Council designate the land as Open Space on their planning maps. A nursery, consisting of a large building, concreted areas and an inevitable car park are not in keeping with such recommendations.
2. As detailed in our original representations against building on this site, the City Council and national policies on Open Space assume a presumption that such space is not built on. If there is an extraordinary imperative, then like-for-like space must be provided to communities in the near vicinity. The Council were unable to find such space three years ago, and since there has been continual building work in those three years, there is even less space available now.
3. Should a nursery be built, it would then dominate the land that is currently used for key open space learning activities by more than 25 schools and nurseries in the local area, as well as all the other community local space activities. The necessarily reduced wild space footprint would inevitably be devastated by over-use.

Fundamentally, we urge the Council to stop approving planning requests in this very highly populated area of the city without properly considering the knock on effects on both open space and amenity provision for the local community. These go hand-in-hand. The Council wouldn't need to consider nursery provision if there hadn't, in the last ten years, been new building on the former BBC site, the old North Kelvin school site on Oban Drive, the old petrol station site on Queen Margaret Drive, as well as the current or proposed building on the Shakespeare Street school site and the old Kelbourne Street church site. Could the approval of all this building not included some requirement for amenity provision. Furthermore, this continual programme of building is relentlessly removing open and green space from both the rich and poor on the North Kelvin / Maryhill boundary. The greatly increased population has required the requisition of around half of the North Kelvin pitches for the building of a new primary school, with the consequent loss of trees and open/green

play space, and the Shakespeare School redevelopment also represents a loss of open/green space.

The Children's Wood/North Kelvin Meadow has significant engagement from its community and extensive use – this is not the initiative of a small group of people but rather an engaged and extensive community of partners as can be seen from the vibrancy and success of the previous campaigns against building on the land. We request an appeal in the hope that the council will review the inclusion of this clause which undermines the very essence and ethos of the asset transfer process which aims to empower communities in positive developments which enrich wider society.