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8th September 2016

Dear Councillor,

Goldsworth Park Recreation Area –Landscaping Master Plan

The Council will shortly receive the report of a consultants' review of the Playing Pitch Strategy. This has involved consulting a variety of partners (primarily sports clubs, we believe) and National Governing Bodies about future club development needs and mapping these against the future demographic profile of the area. When the report is received, officers will make recommendations for the most appropriate locations for the development of new playing pitches and will consider Council land, including Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground, as well as third party land such as school playing fields.

The Goldsworth Park Community Association (GPCA) is concerned that the review appears to be focused solely on the need for sports pitches; there is no indication that needs and views of residents and the nature of the land identified for development will be considered when officers make their recommendations.

The GPCA supports the development of facilities for sports and recreation in general, but cannot support the construction of more sports pitches on the Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground. There are already seven football pitches, an area which can be used for cricket in season, two hockey pitches, a BMX trail, a basketball court, and an outdoor gym. The recreation ground would cease to be multi-functional if the wild area known as the North Meadow were to be levelled, mown and marked out for football pitches.

Recreation is not only about organised sports. The North Meadow is the only part of the Recreation Ground which is accessible at all times; it is a favourite area for adults and children alike for walking, for exercising dogs and for well-being - just enjoying the environment. It is also used for nature study by the local schools and youth organisations.

The Council's Natural Woking - Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategy (2016) should be a key element in any such decisions. In this strategy, biodiversity is defined as "*the variety of all life on Earth and includes all species of animals and plants*". Green infrastructure is defined as "*A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.*" The Strategy identifies many factors which threaten the borough's biodiversity and green infrastructure network including:

Habitat loss or damage through development, directly or indirectly – football pitches would destroy the habitat of the North Meadow. Informal surveys of the area identified around 90 species of grasses and wildflowers; these support a variety of insects, including 11 species

of bees which are in decline nationally. The insects support bats and other small mammals which, in turn support the owls that nest in the trees nearby. This environment must be worth protecting and managing.

Habitat loss, degradation or decline through lack of management – this area should be actively managed as a meadow, like Brookwood Country Park and Mayford Meadows. The Council has successfully increased the presence of wildflowers in various parts of the Borough including White Rose Lane, Hoe Valley Park and Westfield Common and intends to extend this project to other parts of the Borough in the next few years, including around Council owned recreational grounds. The North Meadow in Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground is an ideal location for the incorporation of more wild flowers in keeping with the intention of maintaining a healthy eco-system.

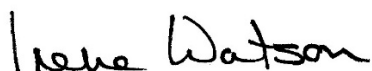
Over the past 25 years, this area has been the subject of numerous surveys, reviews and reports, and proposals to manage the area in question as meadowland have been considered on a number of occasions, notably the 1996 Landscape Master Plan and the 2003 plan by the Environment Agency. These plans recommended improvements to the lake, the creation of a wetland area and management of the open land as a meadow or heathland. Although the recommendations were accepted, little or nothing has been done to implement them other than the improvements to the lake which were undertaken by volunteers with the support of the GPCA.

The vast majority of residents of Goldsworth Park and visitors to the area are strongly in favour of keeping, improving and managing the North Meadow. They recognise the benefits that managing the natural environment can bring; for example, over 100 species of birds and 14 species of dragon and damsel fly have been recorded unofficially around the lake since the lake banks were restored and planted with appropriate reeds, rushes, etc. If there is any suggestion that this area of the Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground should be developed for more football pitches, the GPCA asks that an official and detailed survey of the flora and fauna of the area is carried out before the decision is finally made, as was done at Westfield Common.

I am sure you are aware of the petition to save this area from development which attracted over 1,400 signatures; I would be happy to arrange for you to meet residents to discuss the issue. Perhaps you would like to visit to see the Meadow and the lake for yourself?

I hope that the GPCA, the residents of and visitors to this area can count on your support to ensure that proper consideration will be given to their needs and the needs of the environment the when the matter reaches Councillors and Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Irene Watson,
Chair, GPCA

This letter is being sent to the Ward Councillors for Goldsworth Park and Horsell and the Portfolio Holders for Cultural & Community Development and Environment & Sustainability. Copies will be sent to the Chief Executive, the relevant Strategic Directors, the Neighbourhood Services Department, the Green Infrastructure and Planning Policy Team, members of the Lake & Recreation Ground Users Group and other interested parties.