

Save Stoke Lodge Parkland

For the attention of:
Frances Horner, Senior Solicitor
Legal Division,
Bristol City Council
Council House
College Green
Bristol BS1 5RT

“Brockfields”
68a Coombe Lane
Bristol
BS9 2AY

4th March 2011.

Dear Sir

Application for the registration of land as a Town or Village Green

Please accept and process the enclosed Application for Stoke Lodge Parkland, Stoke Bishop, Bristol, BS9 1BN, comprising approximately 21 acres of curtilage to the Grade 2 listed Farm and Manor House known as Stoke Lodge. For the avoidance of doubt, the Grade 2 listed House and immediate garden areas and access routes including the car park do not form part of this application (see volume 1 section 4, Statutory Declaration, plus plans and notes of explanation).

This Parkland has been used and enjoyed extensively by the community consistently for recreational use, as of right, throughout the ownership by Bristol City Council which has extended over 64 years. Both the House and Parkland are owned by Bristol City Council. The House is utilised as an adult learning centre, and the Parkland is administered by the Education Department now referred to as Children and Young People’s Services. Bristol City Council has granted Cotham School the use of the Parkland and sporting pitches. However, Cotham School is located approximately 3 miles by road from this site and as well as the school’s own use of the sports facilities, which is limited, they administer the renting of pitches to local clubs on afternoons, evenings and at weekends via their sub-contracted pitch maintenance team. As part of this application it is intended that sporting use by Cotham School and local clubs should continue on the current basis with the current level of facilities, with the exception of improvements to the changing rooms which are currently not fit for purpose pending repair/replacement. It should be noted also that the Parkland is not currently classified by Bristol City Council as Green Space (see evidence item 18, Appendix XIV).

Save Stoke Lodge Parkland (SSLP) was formed with overwhelming public support to ensure that this Parkland, which is the last green space in Stoke Bishop, is preserved for the whole community to use both now and in the future. SSLP is a properly constituted community stakeholder group (see evidence, Appendix V) and was formed on 28th July 2010 at a public meeting attended by approximately 240 members of the community to co-ordinate the response to a Briefing Note used as a consultation document issued by Bristol City Council (see evidence item 10, Appendix VI). This council document contained the proposal and recommendation to fence off the perimeter of the Parkland to exclude free public access with the twin objectives of (a) developing the site to provide enhanced sports facilities and creating a gated facility with the potential for greater commercialisation of the site, and (b) more worryingly, aiming to preclude and frustrate the opportunity to secure Town or Village Green status by preventing unfettered public access as of right (see evidence item 12, Appendix VIII).

The recommendations and proposals contained in the Briefing Note were defeated and were then withdrawn by Bristol City Council due to the weight of public opposition demonstrated by the mass of correspondence to the council from the community, by representation at Council and Cabinet meetings and, perhaps most impressively, by the Neighbourhood Partnership Open Forum Consultation Meeting held at St Mary Magdalene Church on 25th August 2010 attended by approximately 250 local residents. At this meeting there was a unanimous vote (with one abstention from a council employee) to reject the contents of the Briefing Note as presented on the night by the

owner of the report, (Michael Branaghan, the Services Manager Capital Assets and Access) together with his team and other council officers and, most importantly, Cllr. Clare Champion-Smith, Bristol City Council Cabinet Member responsible for Children and Young People's Services. Please see:-

- o Evidence item 13, Appendix IX, minutes from the 25th August 2010
- o Evidence item 14, Appendix X, extract from minutes dated 15th September 2010, section 8, when this issue was discussed at the Neighbourhood Partnership and Committee meeting attended by all local Councillors. At this meeting Cllr. Clare Champion-Smith confirmed her recognition of the community view and gave a firm undertaking on behalf of Bristol City Council Cabinet not to restrict free public access "as of right", and set out her commitment to maintain the status quo of shared use by the Community and Cotham School.

Since achieving these decisions there have been several new threats that may take away community access to the Parklands:

- a) On 3rd November 2010 Bristol City Council officers and a representative from Cotham School presented revised sporting enhancements some of which would require extensive earth works that would threaten existing specimen trees and disrupt drainage and water courses. The wish for fencing was also reintroduced which would exclude people and animals (see evidence item 11, Appendix VII for updated plan dated August 2010, issued November 2010).
- b) We understand that Cotham School may apply for academy status, indeed Bristol City Council have confirmed that if Cotham School were successful in such an application they would grant them a 125-year lease to administer the Parkland as they wish. (see evidence item 17, Appendix XIII)
- c) Bristol Parent's Group are an action group from North West Bristol engaged in providing a new secondary school in NW Bristol via the Government Free School Initiative. They have partnered with the Russell Education Trust and together they have identified Stoke Lodge Parkland as one of their proposed target sites, albeit that St Ursula's site BS9 4DT is their preferred choice. However, the St Ursula's site is being pursued by other interested parties hoping to provide a Primary School and a Through School.
A new secondary school on Stoke Lodge Parkland would require new buildings and playing fields with the potential to occupy most of the site, with any surplus sold for development to help fund the project.
- d) Whilst Bristol City Council appears to have put any development aspirations on hold there is no guarantee that the need for money by future administrations will not cause them to consider a change of mind.

During the Neighbourhood Partnership Open Forum Consultation Meeting held on 25th August 2010 the issue of seeking Town or Village Green Status was raised by the residents in attendance, in response the SSLP committee undertook to investigate the process. During the ensuing six months we have found that the initial feelings of success within the community have been eroded by the realisation that this precious open space will face ongoing challenges from various sources that will seek to take away community access.

Based on this growing community concern, and in accordance with our aims and objectives, we have concluded that achieving Town or Village Green status is the only way of securing ongoing access, as of right, to the Parkland for the Community to use and enjoy in perpetuity.

During the collation of the attached witness statements we could not help but be moved by the sheer passion and emotional bond that the community has established with Stoke Lodge Parkland over the past 64 years. The committee of Save Stoke Lodge Parkland therefore are pleased to submit this application on behalf of the community, and authorises David Mayer, Chairman of the group, to sign the Application Form 44 and the Statutory Declaration on their behalf.

Yours faithfully

Please see table below for signatures

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Committee member	Signature	Committee member	Signature
David Mayer		Bryan McKenna	
Henry Alpass		David Faulkner	
Stewart Mason		Susan Mayer	
Sheila Preece		Alan Preece	
Bill Hayes			