

# WHITELEY PARISH COUNCIL - PRESENTATION

## WCC CABINET TUESDAY 31 MAY 06

First of all I would like to thank the Leader and members of the Cabinet for taking time yesterday morning to visit Whiteley.

Since the presentation to Cabinet on 22 March the position of the Parish Council has not altered - we remain totally opposed to the proposal by Hampshire County Council to use of the Meadowside Recreation ground to build a new primary School.

Our objections, which are based on information provided by Hampshire County Council, are well documented in previous correspondence with the City Council and Cabinet papers, and it is not my intention, in the short time I have available today, to repeat these except to say that the Meadowside is the only open space in Whiteley, and it has taken 10 years for it to become a useful facility for the community.

As the major stakeholder, the Parish Council will do its utmost not to see it destroyed especially as there is already a deficit of sports pitches.

As the Cabinet is fully aware this is a sensitive matter locally and it is clear that opposition to the Hampshire County Council proposal is growing. The Parish Council can demonstrate considerable support from residents, and we have already presented petitions to the City Council which by far exceed the “Yes” returns from the Hampshire County Council consultation process by at least 3 to 1. There are more petitions to come.

Within the community there is growing concern about the effect this proposal will have, and the biggest disappointment is the manner in which Hampshire County Council has handled this process. The Government’s initiative to achieve more input and grass root involvement is being widely promoted by Winchester City Council through the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This is most welcomed by all the Winchester City Town and Parish Councils, yet here is an example where grass root

involvement has been non-existent. The public meeting in January this year did little to allay local concerns, and it is little wonder that many residents particularly those who use the Meadowside Centre and the surrounding open space are both suspicious and apprehensive about the unknown or unforeseen effects this proposal may have on the community in the short, medium and long term.

There has also been much said about the option to build in North Whiteley and we are led to believe that a feasibility study has been undertaken by Hampshire County Council, but again we have seen no written evidence to support claims that it is unsuitable for a school. Indeed it is quite astonishing that the Diocese of Portsmouth has recently written stating that land in North Whiteley is not an appropriate site for a Church when we understand they may not even have visited the site.

Given the sensitivities associated with this proposal, and the lack of detail to support statements made during the public consultation process, it is clear there is an urgent need for a study

to be undertaken by independent consultants to address all issues relating to this proposal, and the likely effects it will have on the Whiteley community. The Parish Council strongly recommends that this study, which should take the form of an Environmental Impact Assessment, should be fully considered by stakeholders prior to any final decision being taken by Winchester City Council regarding the release of land at the Meadowside to Hampshire County Council. The study should also address the land at Leafy Lane and that on offer at North Whiteley. The Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to work closely with Winchester City Council in order to resolve this matter.

MRE  
30 May 06