

**E – mail correspondence of the Chief Executive Leeds City Council to the Friends of Gledhow Field**

**From:** Riordan, Tom  
**Sent:** 20 July 2015 10:18  
**To:** [info@friendsofgledhowfield.org](mailto:info@friendsofgledhowfield.org)  
**Subject:** The Future of Gledhow Field

Dear Mr Sellars

Thanks for your email. Having discussed the issues with the appropriate Council officers, I can now offer the following response, which is further to those that I believe have already been provided to you at your meetings of 18<sup>th</sup> June and more recently 13<sup>th</sup> July 2015 with local ward Members.

As you may be aware, there is a significant shortfall of primary school places in the Roundhay area, a situation which the Council is proactively trying to redress. The expansion of Gledhow Primary School to a 3FE primary school is a key element in seeking to ensure that no child is left without a placement at one of their local schools.

The impact of expanding Gledhow Primary School extends to both the physical building and associated grounds. The proposed development will result in a large displacement of hard play and an element of sports pitch provision due to the construction of a new teaching block. Whilst every endeavour has been made to minimise the impact upon existing external facilities it is not possible to expand the current school buildings to accommodate a 50% increase in pupil numbers, from a 2FE to a 3FE school, without the loss of some of these areas. By increasing the number of pupil places at the school, there is a need to both re-provide outdoor space lost as a consequence of expanding the school building, and to increase the overall outdoor space provision in a safe and secure setting to safeguard the health and wellbeing of pupils. To this end the school, supported by the Council, believes it is necessary to 'fence in' all of their the outdoor space, to ensure pupil safety and enable it to be secured overnight to guard against the possibility of dog excrement, fly tipping, needles and any other activities which may create a pupil safeguarding issue.

It is my understanding that the school and its Board of Governors has committed to maintaining community access to the area of 'the postage stamp' proposed to be fenced in, by way of community lettings from which they will not seek to profit.

You raise in your correspondence the issue of funding the proposed fencing. The cost of the fencing will be covered from the bulge cohort programme of works to enable an earlier (September 2015) additional form entry (30 pupil) intake at Reception class and not S106 monies.

I acknowledge your assertion that the Friends of Gledhow Field does not hold a view point on the expansion of the school, and that your sole concern is the fencing in of 'the postage stamp' field to the rear of the school. It is hard to separate one issue from the other given that with the need to expand the school comes the intrinsic need to increase the outdoor space provision in a safe and secure manner.

Whilst I can appreciate the local communities concerns over loss of freely accessible greenspace, the proposed enclosure of 'the postage stamp' does leave a peripheral area around two sides of the fence line which the public can access. Furthermore, the community does have within close, or reasonable proximity a number of other greenspaces: there is a well-established park at the corner of Chandos Gardens and Lidgett Lane, immediately to the north of the school, which includes a children's play area and informal open greenspace; Gledhow Valley Woods and Chapel Allerton Park are both within half a mile; and additional areas of accessible greenspace in the locality exist at Lincombe Mount and Allerton Grange Fields.

On the matter of there being time for further community engagement and consultation, as I am sure you will understand both the school and Council (as the Local Education Authority) before entering into an agreement to expand need certainty that an increased outdoor space requirement can be delivered. Leaving this critical element of a school expansion unconfirmed would call into jeopardy the viability of the whole scheme.

Regarding the Roundhay Neighbourhood Design Statement, which has been adopted as a supplementary planning document, from a planning point of view it would only have relevance if there was a planning application, which due to the height of the proposed fence (less than 2m) is not required. The design statement does include a range of community aspirations and recommendations, of which safeguarding of the field appears to be one, as well as access to 'the postage stamp' needing clearer definition. Both of which points aim to be addressed by formalising use of the field and access points to it.

The history to the field, as I am sure you are aware, is that the area was acquired by the Council in 1945 for the specific purpose of education provision, not for the benefit of the citizens of Leeds (as much land acquired by the Council overtime has been) and with no restrictions on the title as to the site's use. The land has been accessible for public use but is not formally designated Public Open Space. Whilst the school did not fence in 'the postage stamp' along with the rest of its outdoor space following the 1996 Dunblane tragedy, the area has continually been maintained by the school, at its expense, or through lease arrangements it entered into in respect of the field (Leeds Rugby Club 1983 to 2006).

As a point of clarification I would like to make it clear that neither the Council nor school has any intention to utilise the field for anything other than team sports for the school and local community. I understand that the petition which gathered 400 signatures was based on 'the postage stamp' being developed as a private 'Soccer Centre', which is not the case.

To conclude, as you will appreciate, the demand for school places within the Roundhay area is reaching critical mass. The permanent expansion of Gledhow Primary School, from a 420 place primary to 630, is an essential component of the strategy to address pupil place need within the ward. As a valued community body Gledhow Primary School has pushed the Council to ensure the 'outstanding' standards and ethos of the school are not diminished as a consequence of the expansion. Of key concern for the Board of Governors is the need to ensure every pupil has access to a first rate physical education curriculum, and this can only be achieved with the addition of 'the postage stamp' to the formal boundary, which the school has continually maintained.

Further to the above I believe your concerns are now to be considered at Scrutiny Board on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2015 and therefore an opportunity will exist for discussion of much of the above.

Kind regards

Tom

Tom Riordan  
Chief Executive  
Leeds City Council