

Dear Councillor Rea, Fiona Dean and Tim Durrant,

Friends of Waterlow Park's response to Camden's position on the Play area

Following our meeting on Friday the committee of the Friends of Waterlow Park have considered all the options. As you know FoWP is not against a new play area, indeed had agreed this for site 5 with Camden some years ago in the Heritage Lottery bid which was accepted.

However we are deeply opposed to the site which you have chosen namely site 4 near the hollow tree. This is because we must reflect the views of the majority of Waterlow Park users and it is clear that there is a strong view that a play area in site 4 will have an adverse impact on the integrity of the park. A play area in the site Camden has unilaterally chosen will be visible from almost all directions in the park – it is in almost all the sightlines.

We very much regret that the whole consultation exercise has been bungled from start to finish. The Friends were not contacted until mid October, once key decisions had been taken. Waterlow Park was put forward as a site by Camden in its grant application to the DCFS earlier in 2008 without any reference to us. The slightest knowledge of the special nature of Waterlow Park should have alerted Camden to the problematic nature of this strategy. We would have very much liked to have been involved in looking at options much earlier and in helping you to mount a proper consultation exercise which was a genuine attempt to find out what park users and lovers wanted. A week in mid December with no warning with very limited information about options in no way meets any reasonable criteria for a pukka public consultation exercise

We are also clear that if a properly carried out consultation with sensible options / questions and statistically reliable numbers had revealed a clear majority in favour of there being a play area on site 4 we would have accepted this. However, the serious absence of this and the very considerable opposition to site 4 we have been made aware of means we cannot condone your strategy and work with you on this issue.

Camden Council does not own Waterlow Park which was gifted to the people of London as a “garden for the gardenless”. Rather it is the trustee of the park and therefore should be alive to its special nature and run it both for the benefit of all local residents and posterity.

We trust that lessons will have been learned and close co-operation going forward will prevent any similar situation arising in future. FOWP have many other objectives identified by local residents and park users which we hope to work constructively with Camden to achieve such as improving the upper pond/nature area, the aviary and horticultural maintenance.

Ceridwen Roberts

Chair - Friends of Waterlow Park