

The WEST PARK CHRONICLE

The Community Newspaper for West Park

December 2016

—Special Edition—

School Issues that could affect West Park

Several factors seem to be coming together that could affect our local amenity. Whether it's for better or worse will depend on decisions made by the council. This email is to give you advance warning so that we'll all be prepared to make representations at the appropriate time if necessary to uphold our interests.

The Issues

- There is a shortage of primary school places in North Leeds. It's so bad that some parents didn't even get any of their first five choices. An obvious solution would be to use part of the site of the former West Park Centre (WPC), and West Park School for that purpose because it has excellent car parking and there are covenants on the site that were intended to keep this land for educational purposes only.
- However the council has advertised the WPC site for sale for housing development. You can read the sales brochure [here](#). This sale would contradict previous Council Site Allocation proposals, and disregards the covenants.
- Instead the council's Asset Management department has suggested that St Chad' primary school should fence off part of the West Park fields adjacent to the existing school and use it to provide for an additional intake of pupils.
- A problem with this, and one which School Services seem to be unaware

of, is that the West Park Fields were granted Fields-in-Trust (FIT) status to commemorate the jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. This protects the fields from future development and is to encourage local residents to get involved in the management of the fields, and indeed the West Park Fields Group (WPFG) has since established a community orchard and has further plans to enhance the fields and facilities.

The Implications of expanding St Chad's

Clearly it's good to have a primary school in the neighbourhood, but any expansion needs to be handled carefully to avoid adverse effects on local residents.

St Chad's School was built without much provision for drop-off by car. The result is that twice a day those living in nearby streets have to suffer congestion, noise, and air pollution from parents' cars. It's not uncommon in the Arncliffe Road area for cars to wait (with engines running) for forty minutes before the end of the school day to ensure they get a parking place near the school.

This will get a lot worse if the school almost doubles in size. (Assuming 180 extra pupils are added to the 237 on the school roll in 2013 according to Ofsted 2013). Also of course there'll be more noise from normal school related activities, bearing in mind that the school and possible extensions to it will be quite close to the neighbouring houses.

Furthermore, if St Chad's expands, the extended school buildings and play-ground areas will no doubt be fenced off from the fields along Northolme Avenue and partly along Northolme Crescent, thereby impeding the main access route to the fields for people living in this part of West Park.

WPRA's Opinion

It seems perverse for the Council to sell off land (the West Park Centre) that's close to St Chad's school, which was previously used as a school and which has excellent car parking, and then to encourage building new school premises on the green fields which they have undertaken to protect!

What's next?

- Before anything happens, the school has to carry out a consultation exercise with parents, some of whom may not welcome their children being taught at a larger school, and the local residents who will bear the impact of a larger school on their environment. This will give residents a chance to voice their opinion, and is likely to happen sometime in the New Year.

- Also before anything can happen, the Council will have to take any proposal to [Fields-in-Trust](#) (FiT), who could veto the proposal. FiT will consider the views of local residents and assess whether the loss of land is to be compensated for by additional alternative land being provided by the Council.
- School provision is important but so is ensuring minimal impact on West Park. We think it would be better if the council used the former West Park Centre site for school provision instead of going back on a decision to protect local green space.
- Local councillors have alerted WPRA about this coming issue and WPRA have been in contact with FiT. To date there has been not contact from the school, School Services, or the council. The attached map shows the FiT area of West Park fields. The loss of space should the school be extended is approximately equivalent to the area occupied by the West Park Centre site.
- **We don't need to do anything immediately except to keep an eye on developments, which WPRA intends to do.**

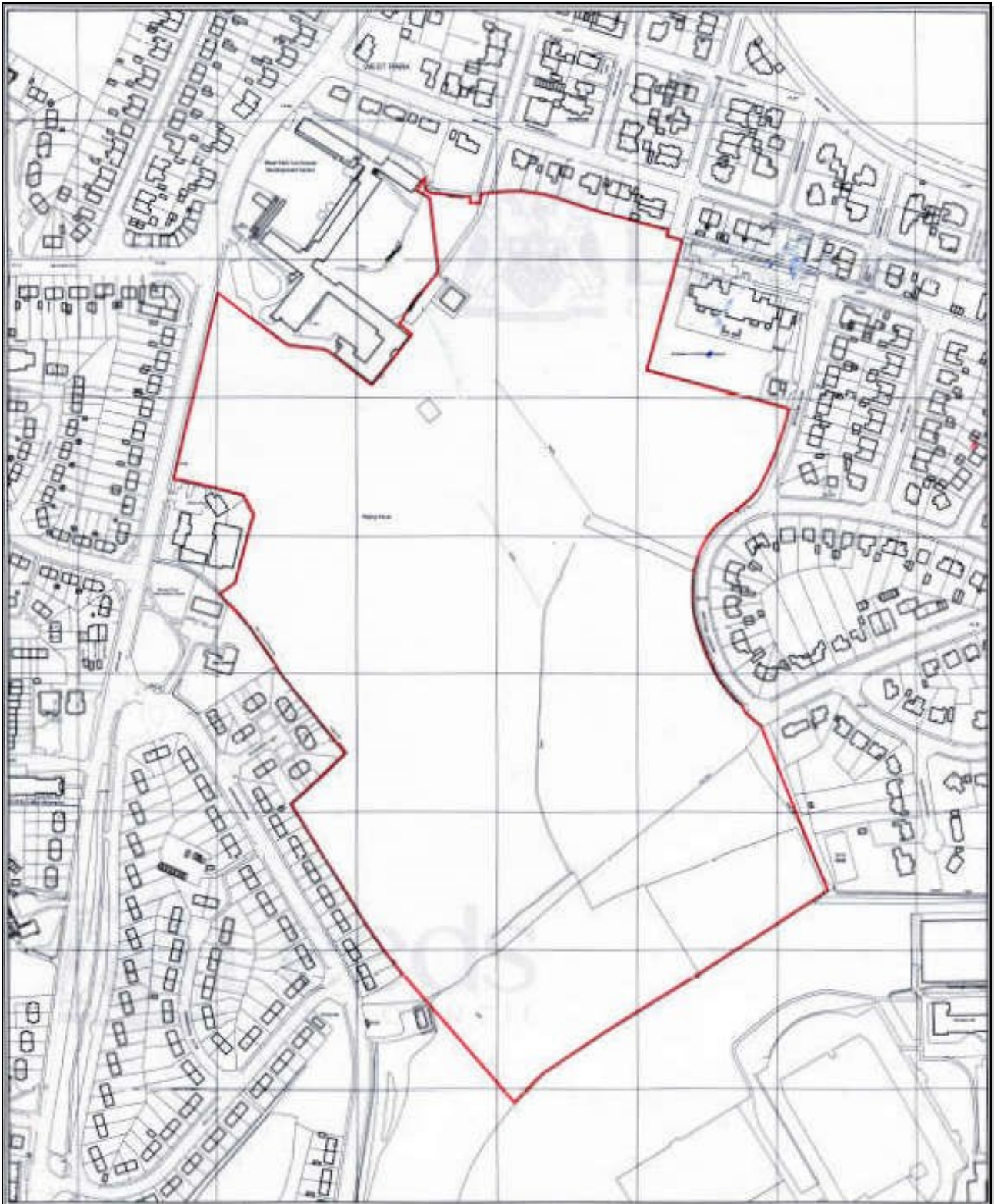
Extracts from the Deed of Dedication made on November 6th, 2013 between Leeds City Council and the National Playing Fields Association, operating as Fields-in-Trust.

3. *The Council gives the following undertakings:*

3.1 *Not to use the property or permit the property to be used for any purpose other than as a public playing field and recreation ground, including woodlands and nature area: <snip>*

4. *Notwithstanding clause 3.2, FiT may at its absolute discretion consent to the disposal of the property provided that the Council at the request of FiT:*

4.1 *Replaces or agrees to replace the property with a piece of freehold land approved by FiT which is of equivalent or better quality than the property, with equivalent or better facilities than the property, of the same or greater dimensions than the property, in the same catchment area as the property, and as accessible to the public as the property (the Replacement Site), and applies such, of the proceeds of any sale of the property as are necessary to do so; and <snip>*



© Crown Copyright and database right 2013
Ordnance Survey 100019282/130000

**WEST PARK PLAYING FIELDS
WEST PARK
LEEDS LS16**

PREP BY M CHRISTIAN
DATE 14/02/2013
OS No SE28375W
Scale 1:2,500



PLAN No 14813/B