

Residents give Thumbs Down to Cairntows Park developer

✘ The residents who attended the meeting tonight about the proposed development of Cairntows Park in Craigmillar gave the architect trying to explain the plans to them a very rough ride, and told him in no uncertain terms that they did not want any development of their dear green space.

Peter Richardson of ZM architects was representing the developer, New City Vision, who want to build three and four-storey flats on the 70 year-old recreational area and the Taylor Family site. He referred to the Craigmillar Urban Design Framework which is also available online and was approved by the Council in 2005. He said that the framework sets out a vision for Craigmillar.

The meeting had been convened by Susan Carr of the Neighbourhood Alliance on behalf of the Community Regeneration Forum, who are a small organisation. While she said that they had put fliers about the meeting through as many doors as they could reach, she admitted they only have two or three members of staff. The evening adjourned when it was suggested that the meeting was becoming 'farcical'. One member of the audience suggested :-"There is not much point in continuing this meeting tonight."

The idea that this meeting was a formal part of the consultation process required for planning purposes was dismissed. The general view of the meeting was that another session will have to be set up with PARC, (the company set up by the council to provide affordable housing in the area), the developer New City Vision and the council all present for the matter to be discussed properly. A show of hands demonstrated that the feeling was unanimous, and that the proposed development would not be welcomed in the area.

[PARC](#) are a company set up to build and sell homes in the area on a shared equity scheme. This means that the purchaser does not have to pay all of the price of the house on initial purchase.

Some of the comment during the meeting demonstrated the anger which locals feel:-“Where was the consultation changing it from a park to a building site? We are the people it will impact on. There will be no road improvements or car parking spaces. The road is dangerous enough as it is.”

“PARC are only doing this (selling to another party) because the commercial risk is too high for them to do it themselves.”

“Cairntows Park has been a recreational space since before the war.”

PARC are holding a board meeting next Tuesday when locals hope that they will listen to local opinion.

We spoke after the meeting with a few key people

John Manson is 24 and has lived in Craigmillar all of his life:-“I think this is a great facility to have. I have a new born baby and she will play there. There are not many parks around and I think this would be a waste of perfectly good green space.” Another resident of Drybrough Cresecent just “wants it to be left how it is.”

Councillor Mike Bridgman who represents Portobello and Craigmillar said:-“ I think tonight’s meeting got their point across as to how they feel about building on the park. But Cairntows Park was in the masterplan previous to this administration, passed by people who are still actually elected in this area. But it is not a foregone conclusion. The public still has to have its say. There is still a lot of consultation to be done.”

Organiser of the Save the Cairntows Park campaign, Bob Bell,

said:-" I am just delighted that the local community have responded so quickly and have come out tonight in such force and basically let the architect and his client and PARC realise that we are not willing to put up with more green space being taken away, that we don't want the park developed upon not only from the logistical reasons of transport and the eyesore in the centre but also that we want green space. We want space for our children to learn to walk, to ride their bikes, to walk dogs and to play sports."

Local MP, Sheila Gilmore, said:- "I think that at this meeting the local population of all ages have shown quite clearly that they are opposed to development on this piece of open ground.

That doesn't surprise me that people feel like that.

With all the building and rebuilding, already some green space has been lost. This is a longstanding piece of green space here and there do seem to be plenty of other places where building is actually supposed to happen at some point in the future. It seems perverse to take away what is actually a park when there is open space basically lying to waste at the moment and which could be built on.

I am going to contact PARC which is an arms length company set up by the council, asking them to withdraw their whole idea. Failing their immediate withdrawal of the proposal then they have to come and explain to local people what they are trying to do.

They were not here today, and I think that did not help the debate at all. An architect only doing the job that he has been asked to do was here and it should really be the promoters of the idea who should be here to say why it is a good idea and to hear what local people have to say."

Lesley Mackenzie, a local resident from Cairntows Close sat in the front row and was very vocal throughout the proceedings. She said:-"We live right on the verge of the park and there

are small children who will be using the park regularly. We need to keep the park. That is somewhere that our child will grow up for the next ten years. She is going to play in the park. She is a keen jogger, she is keen on nature. I am campaigning for her – she loves the park. We have made snowmen in the park, we have used it with the dog. We have used that park a lot. I'll be flyering to keep this campaign going!"

☒ People who would help with leaflet dropping were asked to get in touch with the campaign organisers who also reminded the audience of the [Facebook](#) page and that they could follow the campaign on [Twitter](#) too.

As a reminder, the Physical Development Support Progress Report presented to the meeting of the Economic Development Department of the Council in March 2010 stated the following:-
"Discussions have now been completed with New City Vision which has resulted in proposals that would see further private sector residential development of both the former Niddrie Mill Primary School and Cairntows Park site. This is in tandem with efforts to unlock the future development of the Taylor family site. These are all prominent sites on Niddrie Mains Road and the agreement reached should also allow for the retention of the former school building. By disposing of these sites, PARC will receive a considerable receipt, remove the development risk from the company and facilitate private sector development activity."