

MATTER 2

The net effects of the loss of the existing open space and its replacement by landscaped areas on the site, and by the council's proposed upgrading of North Kelvin sports pitches, on

- a) biodiversity, and
- b) open space provision for community use including children's play and learning

This section outlines the biodiversity of the site known as North Kelvin Meadow and Children's Wood. It also demonstrates that the land is a multifunctional, intergenerational space which has been co-created by the local community and schools. The land and the activities organised there offer experiences that the nearby playpark and botanic gardens cannot offer:

"There is no place like the Children's Wood", it's totally unique. It is different from places like the botanic gardens where there is a playpark created for the children here the children create their own play"

Some activities my children like doing here that they can't do elsewhere: making mud pies in the mud kitchen, swinging on the rope swings or from the hammock. Climbing trees and toasting marshmallows on the fire" Parent from Playgroup.

Football pitches are not a sufficient alternative since the activities happening on the land are intergenerational and multifunctional. A healthy and resilient community should have BOTH football pitches and a wild space. The activities happening on the land are in line with many local and national policies such as national planning policies, community empowerment, play and inclusion. The land provides a biodiverse setting which is both sustainable and valuable to the wider community. The current housing proposal cannot in anyway replace or replicate the land and what is happening on it.



WHY NORTH KELVIN MEADOW?

For 20 years the community of North Kelvinside and Maryhill have wished for and worked to retain the land, now known as North Kelvin Meadow and Children's Wood, as a community resource.

The meadow and wood is an area of land used by the whole community for a variety of activities, many of which Children's Wood charity have initiated, facilitated and supported over the last 4 years. The activities that happen on the land are varied, diverse, intergenerational and inclusive and cannot be replaced by football pitches. The community has co-created the space to make it what it is now and therefore is very different from the nearby Botanic Gardens and the River Kelvin. Many activities happen on the land which cannot and do not happen in other local spaces. For example, the community fire area, climbing trees, community organised events and many more. A healthy community needs both a wild space AND a football pitch, these types of spaces meet different needs within the community and contribute to a resilient and thriving community. The NKM CW situated in an area of profound inequality with one of the most deprived places in Europe on one side: The Wyndford estate which ranks most deprived on indexes of deprivation (see appendix 2) and one of the most affluent areas: Hillead ranks the highest on nearly all indices.

This document will demonstrate that Children's Wood has created a sustainable alternative to the proposed building of high end housing on the land. The document will highlight how the land is unique in what it offers the community and how this grassroots project is responding to the growing 21st century needs within the community. This project has longevity and meets the requirements of Community Empowerment Act passed in April this year: see section in this document on Public Health, Social Well-being, Environmental well-being.

The Children's Wood were granted full planning permission by Glasgow City Council earlier this year for a community park and garden, this was backed by all councillors on the planning committee. The Children's Wood charity is bringing work to the area and already has two employees as well as numerous volunteers. They facilitate the schools and community use of the land as well as building biodiversity and maintaining the wildness of the space. Together with the community Children's Wood is allowing the space to be co-created for 21st century needs. This is part of the Children's Wood's Sustainable Futures Programme. (see section on existing and emerging projects)

Who Are We?

The Children's Wood is a registered charity. The activities carried out by the Children's Wood are at the vanguard of outdoor education and community work, with over 100 local volunteers and thousands of people benefiting from both its work and the space (North Kelvin Meadow and the Children's Wood.)

What Do CW Do?

The charity works with schools, teachers, the foodbank, universities and colleges, doctors, community groups, families and the wider community to meet different 21st century issues: food poverty, low levels of child well-being, individualism, issues relating to the integration of asylum seekers, materialism, loneliness, inequality, mental and physical health problems to name a few.

The Children's Wood activities, and the land itself, delivers on many of the current policies and strategies laid out by Glasgow City Council (e.g. Playing for Real, Glasgow's Environment Strategy, GCC's Strategic plan 2014-2017) and the Scottish Government (e.g. The Community Empowerment Act, Land Reform Bill, Good Places Better Health, Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning).

The land is no longer used as sport pitches, but instead is used by over 20 schools and nurseries, universities, colleges, community groups and the wider community. Local people use the space as an "outdoor community centre", growing fresh produce, exercising, and hosting /attending monthly community events.

The land is servicing multiple groups and meeting different needs. This has been recognised externally by the awards and funding for the Children's Wood activities.



“The Children’s Wood is such an integral and important part of our community, especially for our children. It’s so precious for them to have access to this wild, natural space, to learn and enjoy the flowers and wildlife there. It’s also such a hub of the community too, with all the wonderful events, storytelling and activities. I’m horrified that Glasgow City Council would even consider building on it. These places should be loved and protected, not just for our children but for the future generations to come.”

Kate Dickie, Game of Thrones

Why Save Our Land?

North Kelvin Meadow and the Children’s Wood is situated in one of the most unequal areas in Scotland (see appendix2) Taking this resource – and by association the Children’s Wood activities – away from the community, for high end housing, would impact on many different groups and people, but it will be a double blow for those in the area who have the least. The housing plans would take away a much-needed space for many of the most vulnerable local people. Here are some examples of what people say about the space and Children’s Wood activities:

- Parents of children with autism say that the meadow and wood is the only place in the area where they can take their children, they say this is because of the calming effect of the space and the inclusive attitude of the charity.
- Some local people say they cannot afford to go to the countryside but can afford to walk to the meadow and wood and it has the same effect as being away in nature.
- Other people have said that the space makes them feel included and part of a community, which has increased their well-being.
- Parents say their children can play freely here, they can climb trees, toast marshmallows on a fire and be part of a community.
- Local people say that they can feed themselves from the community garden and this has been invaluable when the foodbank isn’t open.



A rich variety of people use this land: rich/poor, young/old, working/not working, hungry/well fed, assylum seekers and local people. Having a wild space in the heart of a complex community can impact on the inequalities and play a part in levelling the playing field – building on the land would only make the effects of inequality worse in this area.

This project and space is a great opportunity for Glasgow City Council to recognise the vision and the journey of the NKM CW community to make Glasgow an even better place to live, especially for those who need it the most. Please support the land and the communities’ vision and reject the plans for housing.



PLAY STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND

Margaret Hunter Blair Play Scotland

“The current Planning Review received submissions to consider provision for the planning and protection of spaces for play and informal recreation. This lack of protection makes areas like the Children's Wood vulnerable despite there being no similar alternative space within walking distance in the community. Scotland's National Play Strategy recognises that having time, freedom and good places for playing are of paramount importance to all children, their families and the wider community.

“We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. A nation which values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all our children and young people; in their homes, early learning and childcare settings, schools and communities.”

Aileen Campbell, former Minister for Children and Young People (2013) Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision

In 2013, General Comment 17 on Article 31 of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) clarified governments' obligations to 'promote, protect and fulfil' children's right to play by means of appropriate 'legislation, planning and budgets'.

(Governments..) “need to create time and space for children to engage in spontaneous play, recreation and creativity, and to promote societal attitudes that support and encourage such activity.” **UNCRC General Comment 17**

Playing contributes to the wellbeing and resilience of all of us – the Children's Wood provides a community supported environment that supports a broad range of opportunities for children's play and recreation. This is a unique community space which addresses the barriers to children playing outside in Glasgow, with a group which positively plans for increased and improved opportunities for play in the **Fourth most deprived Ward in Europe**. The statutory duty for Play Sufficiency in Wales is part of anti poverty legislation.

“High quality play opportunities for all children may contribute to mitigating the negative effects of poverty on children's lives and help to build their resilience. Play can also be a means of reducing inequalities between children living in families that can afford costly recreational provision and those that cannot so reducing poverty of experience for all children.”

Everyone knows that playing is good for children. And there is a growing body of solid evidence of the long-term benefits. Evidenced studies show that play projects are just as effective as sport and PE programmes in boosting physical activity levels and hence helping to tackle child inactivity and obesity; support children to become more resilient through the development of their emotional and social self-management skills; provide powerful opportunities for children to engage positively with their school and the wider community, and with nature and the environment.

The 2015 Household Survey showed that there are high levels of concern over children's safety walking or cycling to the playground. This increases significantly when it comes to going to the park and being in a natural environment or wooded area. Even with two or three friends over half of parents feel concerned about their children being in a natural environment. **As a result only a quarter of children in Scotland are allowed by parents to access the natural environment. This makes playing outdoors a minority activity, and one that is more likely to be permitted to boys.** It is of significant concern that in their early teens, girls even more than boys, have very little activity outside of school.

The 'Move More' study, partly funded by the World Cancer Research Fund, has highlighted the need for children to be given more opportunities to play outdoors with friends.

Part of the solution outlined in the Play Strategy is to support parents and community groups in their efforts to create sufficient and satisfying provision of spaces for play and recreation within walking distance in and around their communities. The Children's Wood represents a wonderful example of community empowerment and engagement to meet children's need and right to play in an area of high deprivation. ”

Marguerite Hunter Blair
Play Scotland

- 70% of adults described children as friendly.
(Playday 2010 Research)
- 81% of adults believe children playing outside helps to improve community spirit.
(Playday 2010 Research)
- 70% think that children playing outside makes an area a better place to live
(Playday 2010 Research)
- Improved facilities for children - increased parental satisfaction with their local area and it's child friendliness (Growing up in Scotland)

Rickets soar as children stay indoors: Number diagnosed with disease quadruples in last ten years

THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Margaret Hunter Blair Play Scotland

“The current Planning Review received submissions to consider provision for the planning and protection of spaces for play and informal recreation. This lack of protection makes areas like the Children’s Wood vulnerable despite there being no similar alternative space within walking distance in the community. Scotland’s National Play Strategy recognises that having time, freedom and good places for playing are of paramount importance to all children, their families and the wider community.

“We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. A nation which values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all our children and young people; in their homes, early learning and childcare settings, schools and communities.”

Aileen Campbell, former Minister for Children and Young People (2013) Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision

In 2013, General Comment 17 on Article 31 of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) clarified governments’ obligations to ‘promote, protect and fulfil’ children’s right to play by means of appropriate ‘legislation, planning and budgets’.

(Governments..) “need to create time and space for children to engage in spontaneous play, recreation and creativity, and to promote societal attitudes that support and encourage such activity.” **UNCRC General Comment 17**

Playing contributes to the wellbeing and resilience of all of us – the Children’s Wood provides a community supported environment that supports a broad range of opportunities for children’s play and recreation. This is a unique community space which addresses the barriers to children playing outside in Glasgow, with a group which positively plans for increased and improved opportunities for play in the **Fourth most deprived Ward in Europe**. The statutory duty for Play Sufficiency in Wales is part of anti poverty legislation.

“High quality play opportunities for all children may contribute to mitigating the negative effects of poverty on children’s lives and help to build their resilience. Play can also be a means of reducing inequalities between children living in families that can afford costly recreational provision and those that cannot so reducing poverty of experience for all children.”

Everyone knows that playing is good for children. And there is a growing body of solid evidence of the long-term benefits. Evidenced studies show that play projects are just as effective as sport and PE programmes in boosting physical activity levels and hence helping to tackle child inactivity and obesity; support children to become more resilient through the development of their emotional and social self-management skills; provide powerful opportunities for children to engage positively with their school and the wider community, and with nature and the environment.

THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Tam Baillie - Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland



Town and Country Planning (Proposed erection of residential development and associated parking, landscaping and vehicular access with demolition of existing structures at site at Kelborne Street/Sanda Street/Clouston Street, Glasgow) Direction 2016

Glasgow City Council Reference: 12/00924/DC

Scottish Government Reference: NOD/GLW/001

I am writing in respect of the above planning application as I understand you are collating evidence on behalf of the Reporter. I have visited the site in my capacity of Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland at the invitation of the Children's Wood group which opposes the application. My interest in the application is to ensure that children's rights are taken into account in coming to a decision on the planning application.

I have a responsibility to promote and safeguard children's rights, paying particular attention to the United Nations Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Scottish Ministers have duties in relation to the rights of children, where they must keep under consideration any steps which they could take which further the effect of the UNCRC and if appropriate, act on these. In respect of the application the most relevant Articles of the UNCRC are:

- **Article 3 (Best interests of the child):** The best interests of children must be the primary concern in making decisions that may affect them.
- **Article 6 (Survival and maximum development):** Children have the right to life. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.

- **Article 24 (Health and health services):** Children have the right to good quality health care.
- **Article 29 (Goals of education):** Children's education should develop each child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest.
- **Article 31 (Leisure, play and culture):** Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.

Whilst all of the Articles are important, I would draw particular attention to Article 31 which I think has a direct bearing on the matters under consideration.

I understand the site is currently used by children for outdoor free play activity. It provides the opportunity for local children to enjoy the health and well-being benefits of outdoor free play in an urban environment. This is consistent with Scottish Government Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan (2013) which has an outcome that:

All children and young people enjoy high quality play opportunities, particularly outdoor free play in stimulating spaces with access to nature, on a daily basis in early learning and childcare, nursery and school. (p13)

I believe a contribution to this policy outcome is currently provided by the site, which if developed in line with the planning application would constitute a loss of valued open/green space and be contrary to the outcome noted in the Scottish Government Acton Plan.

I understand the competing demands on local and national governments and weighing up the relevant importance of different matters in planning decisions. My plea is that children's rights are taken into account and given the weight which they deserve in such decisions. I believe a decision which allows the continuance of the current use of the site would be in children's best interests and is consistent with the Scottish Ministers exercise of their duties and the pursuance of Scottish Government's policies.

I am happy to expand on any part of my submission

Yours sincerely



Tam Baillie
Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland.