



27 September 2017

Summary report for Slough Borough Council Cabinet Meeting  
The disposal of land to the north of Norway Drive, Wexham known as Norway Drive Recreation Ground.

---

The Council has engaged Moot Hill Partners LLP to undertake an investigation and consultation with the objectors and Council staff: by introducing some distance between the Council officers and the objectors it was anticipated that greater cooperation would improve the quality of the report to Cabinet and help inform the decision to proceed or not with the proposed disposal. Terms and conditions applying to the surrender of the lease mean that the financial risks to the Council increase on 3 November 2017.

The Council advertised the proposed disposal of the land and advertisements appeared in two separate editions of Slough Express: 23 and 30 June 2017.

As a result of the advertisements, the Council received one substantial objection which was signed by a further 30 Wexham residents. Moot Hill have examined and investigated the objections. Those investigations were limited by the scope of the exercise and were not exhaustive.

They fall under two principal headings:

1. **Governance: Wexham Court Parish Council**  
and they include complaints/allegations that

- Residents have never been consulted or even informed of the proposed surrender;
- Promised expert assessment and report to address concerns raised did not take place;
- Resident Consultation Working Group elected at May 2014 PC meeting only reported in private;
- Failure to hold statutory PC meetings for several years;
- Assurances given at WCPC meetings by SBC Councillors during 2013-15 broken; Deception; WCPC minutes altered after the event to conceal assurances;

Note: Senior SBC employees/officers attended a PC meeting on 9 September 2014. There are allegations from a resident and counter allegations from the PC that the minutes of a subsequent and associated meeting held on the 16 September 2014 were altered in the reporting of an alleged 'agreement' that there would be a full consultation with Wexham residents on the disposal of the land. Signed minutes of either meeting have not been produced to support the allegations. One serving parish councillor asserted that the signing of parish meeting minutes was regularly delayed.

- Breach of law and Councillors' Code of Conduct;
- Further Parish Lease rescinded without consultation;
- WCPC Failure to provide statutory accounts since 2012;
- WCP Councillors spending public money without accountability/benefitting personally;

Summary conclusions:

The governance objections, as far as we could see within the agreed scope of our investigation, appeared to be politically motivated. Some were abandoned during our investigations; some had scant evidence to support them and others are receiving monitoring from officers of SBC.

The most potentially serious allegations, which were procedural, were not substantiated during our investigations.



27 September 2017

Because the objections we considered had a small supporting base, it is to be inferred that a majority of the approx 7000 Wexham Court Parish residents (who will benefit collectively from the money raised by the surrender of the lease) are likely to be either in favour or neutral.

**2. Objections relating to planning matters.**

- Public to be denied access to amenity land to the detriment of their wellbeing; undertaking by SBC representatives to retain remaining land as 'public open space in perpetuity';

Note: See note on meeting 9/9/14 and 16/9/14 above. There may also be some confusion about the amount of land remaining and it is within the capacity of SBC to clarify that some open space will remain.

- Risk of subsidence and potential property damage;

Note: The remaining open space is alleged to be subject to flooding and poor drainage. Potential engineering consideration if the objection is raised again at the planning stage.

- Traffic and parking problems;

Note: Potential highways consideration if the objection is raised again at the planning stage.

- Additional burden on domestic services and utilities;

Note: Reports of a marked drop in water pressure since Phase 1 has been occupied. Potential engineering consideration if the objection is raised again at the planning stage.

- Visual skyline spoiled;
- Proposed development not in keeping with character of locality and damaging to its visual appearance;

5 October 2017