

## Statement from R Mimmack

I am speaking as Chair of the Batheaston Leisure Association (BLA) and also with the knowledge and support of the School and Batheaston Football club.

The Parish council is being asked this evening to agree a Resolution which will begin the process of turning the document known as the Batheaston Vision Plan into a statutory document for Planning Control purposes. It also signals an intention to make major changes to the recreation and sports facilities in the village.

The Resolution includes the phrase that the BPC is "concerned that the current football field is not large enough to meet FIFA adult standards". Leaving aside that it is the Football Association and not the international body, FIFA, which governs football in this country, the fact is that the existing pitch DOES exceed the minimum size specified in the laws of the game and the Chairman of the Bath & District Football League, Howard Parke, has confirmed to me that the League is entirely satisfied for Batheaston FC to be playing this pitch in the First Division of their Sunday League. This is not therefore a matter which should be of "concern" to the Council.

The alternative site for a football pitch suggested in the Vision Plan is across the new footbridge on the Bathampton flood meadows. Your Chairman acknowledged last Wednesday (*it was Thursday*) at the public meeting that the site shown in the Vision Plan map would be unacceptable because it floods regularly –every other year on average according to the Environment Agency - and proposed therefore that it would need to be further to the south on higher ground. This would be even more remote from Batheaston Village.

Batheaston FC represented here this evening and, like the BLA and School, have not been consulted about the Parish council's plans. The only conversation your chairman has had with the Team Manager was a brief word when he asked if the footballers would like to play on a larger pitch. Of course they would. But I know that they would prefer the existing pitch, to a larger one on the flood meadows for obvious reasons. There has been no discussion with them about the merits of alternative locations.

I share the concerns of many people in the village that the sports field is not just important for organised team games but also a safe enclosed open space where local children can play unsupervised close to their homes. It is also within safe and easy walking distance of the village School who would be extremely concerned if the facility were to move across the River. To move the pitch across the river would require children to cross the London road and the river and then the meadows to reach the playing field. This would be a serious danger to the children or, more likely, the effective loss of the recreation facility.

Some of the council's secret intentions were revealed in an anonymous report given to councillors at the recent Precept meeting to support the allocation of £15,000 for the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. This report included references to:-

- Acquiring land at Bathampton Meadows for a "full-sized" football pitch and possible other sports facilities.
- Comprehensive development of the Coalpit road "corridor" and extension of Coalpit Road
- A statement that the new football field would enhance the prospects of preventing a Park & Ride site on the meadows through the involvement of Sport England.

The idea of extending Coalpit Road, presumably to give alternative access to the School from the east – more cars in Coalpit road, less in Northend. This would mean that the children's playground which is currently safely accessible on foot, would be cut off from nearby houses by road traffic. This would be a major safety and amenity issue and I know that both the School and a lot of parents of young children are very concerned about this.

So to conclude many members of the village community are very concerned about the implications of diminishing the already limited sport and recreation facilities in Batheaston. They are also concerned about the secrecy with which the Council is going about our business. It is time to stop and consult with the people you represent BEFORE not after the Neighbourhood plan is prepared. I urge you not to approve the resolution this evening, but instead to hold full consultations with individuals and local organisations, about the issues to be addressed before going any further.