

Response to golfers article in Daily Echo 2nd February 2012

The original plan was to place the children's play area on the ground between the putting green and the road and in my opinion the ideal position, the golfers didn't like this and despite the general belief that no golf balls would reach this area and the opinion of council officers that no golf balls had been found in the area, golf balls were discovered in this area under the temporary polling station when it was removed last year and it has therefore been ruled out because of health & safety considerations! We could return to this scheme and reduce the 18th hole in size by moving the green down the fairway but this would potentially have a major effect on the golf course!

There were then two other options:

The one favoured by the golfers in the recent echo article and referred to as the "disused football pitch" which would involve removing some of the informal play area which is not disused and used by a lot of the locals as a free play area for football etc. etc., reducing or potentially removing their use of this open space. It would also mean a trek across the car park for parents to use the facilities at the pavilion with the potential problems of kids running unaccompanied across the car park and that I do consider dangerous. Also our surveys carried out on play areas have shown that parents want them to be positioned close to cafe and toilets so a parent can have a coffee/tea etc. while watching the children play (whether you or I believe this it's one of the findings of the survey) if the parents don't have access to toilets and or a cafe, usage drops from about an hour per visit to 10-15 minutes and we therefore have a less popular facility, with all the associated complaints that we have misused councils money etc. Looking at the popularity of Redhill Park, Central Gardens, Alum Chine and Littledown playgrounds highlights this point, imagine going to a soft play park and being told the toilets were a five minute walk away.

Finally the scheme proposed by the officers which is to take 20 out of the 147 car parking spaces and the slope between the car park and the pavilion to create a playground, the officers have at my instigation offered to create some temporary extra parking for the golfers on the green free play area that can be used when the car park is full and they will also do some work on the other car park which is opposite fitness first a five minute walk away. This scheme meets the facilities criteria so usage should be good and the scheme will include a new easier ramp for the golfers from the car park to the club house. The temporary parking spaces will more than cover the loss of spaces taken for the play area.

It might also be interesting to note some history of the park, particularly references to council minutes in 1903 which discuss the modifications to the plans for laying out the park and more importantly in this case a letter from a ratepayers association asking that a suitable part of Queen's Park might be set apart as a playground for children, the town clerk was instructed to reply that it was the intention of the council to do this so the council had already established a policy for a playground in 1903, also when the 5th Earl of Mamesbury sold a 10 acre plot of land to the corporation in the early 1904 as an addition to the park it was with the understanding that within 5 years it was to be laid out as "public walks and pleasure grounds" to complement the other part of the park which were intended to be laid out as recreation ground, a playground and a golf course! It's taken over 100 years to

build the playground which is a little long BUT at least it's being built (see page 13 Queen's park history QPIPS)!

Maybe the golfers don't want anything to interrupt/interfere with their sport BUT they should remember that Queen's Park is a park with a golf course in it and was laid out for ALL the people of Bournemouth and the council decided at the same time as they laid out the golf course that they were going to have a children's playground. I believe that we should encourage children into sport and exercise and with the unfortunate building of all the flats with no facilities over the recent years in the Richmond Park Rd and other areas of the town where can these children go to play and release steam?

I hope that I've laid out some of the reasons and history behind the current scheme and believe consideration should be given to ALL users of Queen's Park. The council has a policy that has at its centre the idea that we will build large play areas that are well used and equipped with the best facilities and are spread evenly throughout the borough and Queen's Park has been highlighted as one of those centres, and the council will finally fulfil its own policy established in 1903.

Finally I'm sure everyone supports the idea that we should have the best play facilities we can for our children as they are after all our future especially as the funding for most of the scheme is coming from the national funds not council tax.

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