



# FRIENDS OF EDGAR'S FIELD PARK

## Objections to Planning Application: 10/12259/FUL - Ship Inn, Handbridge

### (THESE OBJECTIONS ARE TO REPLACE THOSE ORIGINALLY SUBMITTED 6 SEPTEMBER 2010)

Friends of Edgar's Field Park is a community group founded about five years ago and is dedicated to all aspects of the wellbeing of Edgar's Field Park, Handbridge. We believe that this application, 10/12259/FUL, if approved, would have a severe negative impact on the park and we therefore wish to register our objections as follows:

1.) Edgar's Field was given in trust to Chester Corporation and its successors under the 1875 Health Act by the First Duke of Westminster in 1892 for the everlasting use and enjoyment of the inhabitants of Chester and particularly Handbridge. As the public are the beneficiaries of that trust there is a public interest which must be properly taken into account in the planning process. (Although it is not a planning matter it should also be noted that the restrictive covenants of the 1892 Trust prevent any part of Edgar's Field being used for business purposes and especially any activity involving the sale of alcohol.)

2.) Even without the 1892 Trust, this group and a very large number of the other residents of Handbridge are scandalised that any part of this important and unique 118 year old community green space on the South side of the City could be used for commercial purposes. This would create a dangerous precedent for further erosion of the park by similar planning applications in the future that the Council would then find difficult to resist. There would be a damaging change in the park's ambience and a reduction in the amenity of both its habitual and occasional users. Planning Guidance PPG17 makes it clear that local authorities should avoid any erosion of recreational function while maintaining or enhancing the character of open spaces and ensure that open spaces do not suffer from increased overlooking, traffic flows or other encroachment. In this particular case, a newly planted border would be destroyed, the park entrance would be made more crowded and unwelcoming while overlooking would be very heavily increased. It is therefore clear that this proposal does not conform to PPG17 guidance and should not be permitted.

3.) Edgar's Field Park is designated as part of the Strategic Open Space and part of the Green Network for the Chester District. It seems clear that this commercial development in the entrance of the park would negatively affect the local character and quality of Edgar's Field and therefore conflicts with Policy ENV 15. In addition, the intensification of this commercial activity into Edgar's Field would adversely affect its individual character and image, erode its integrity and limit its use and enjoyment by both residents and visitors, conflicting with Policy ENV 26.

4) The proposed extension would detract from Edgar's Field and the Handbridge Conservation area. The existing gable end of warm toned brick compliments its environs and has done so for 150 years. It provides a pleasant, uncluttered backdrop to the park entrance as well as the flowerbed at its base. At best, the proposed extension could be described as undistinguished. With its stark outline, it would be more at home in a factory than a park. This industrial look is neither in keeping with the Victorian terrace to which it would be attached nor with the glass conservatory extension added during the earlier refurbishment. It is particularly unsympathetic to the clearly superior replacement railings that were added to the park during its recent renovation. With its limited depth, the proposed extension would look congested and when in use this would have an intimidating affect on those entering the park. It is important that the entrance to the park should continue to be welcoming and this could not be achieved if it is overcrowded, particularly if this occurs in an unpredictable and uncontrolled manner. The inevitable seasonal operation of

this outdoor area means that it could easily become an unused, leaf and litter filled eyesore in the entrance of the park during the winter and in poor weather. It is also unclear if the furniture will remain in place when it is not in use.

5.) The separation between the proposed open air ground floor pub drinking area and Edgar's Field Park only by waist-high (1200mm) railings is completely inadequate. The Ship Inn already has difficulty preventing its customers from taking their drinks outside, particularly when they are smoking, despite this being an important licensing condition imposed by the Police. This proposal would make enforcement unworkable especially on, for example, Race days and it would be impossible to prevent drinks passing over the railings and spreading throughout the park, which is an alcohol control zone. This is unacceptable as the proposed area is alongside the heavily used main pathway into and out of the park frequented by many children and is also very close to the new children's playground. It should be noted that the head teachers of several local schools have also expressed grave concern on this point as they believe that their students should not be put in a position where they would routinely experience people smoking and drinking alcohol while making their way to and from school. In addition, a large number of parents have expressed serious concerns that their children in the playground would be so closely overlooked by strangers using the proposed area and this could restrict the playground's use mainly to pub customers. A decision on whether children may use the park is usually made by their parents.

6.) The use of the upper floor of the proposed extension for eating and drinking alongside the heavily utilised main pathway into the park and new children's playground is potentially very dangerous. The shortage of space for the ~50 covers planned, the necessary location of tables against the railings and the 95mm gaps between individual rails means that there is a considerable probability that items such as bottles, glasses, knives, forks and possibly cigarette butts could fall or be dropped onto unsuspecting passers-by. It is clear that any glass objects falling approximately 4 metres onto the path below would fragment on impact, showering the legs of passing park users, including children, with shards of glass and possibly causing serious injury.

7.) As they are not substantially enclosed, both floors of the proposed new extension could be used for smoking. Ship Inn Ltd. has stated that this is not intended but this decision could be reversed at any time. It is likely that either there would be smoking in the extension or the number of smokers from the pub gathering in the entrance to the park and alongside the extension would be increased, in either case subjecting people using the park, mostly children to second hand smoke. The March 2010 report entitled 'Passive Smoking and children' by the Tobacco Advisory Group of the Royal College of Physicians, supported by the Governments Chief Medical Officer, and by the Department of Health, outlined how children are particularly vulnerable to passive smoke exposure, and called for smoking to be banned in all outdoor spaces, parks and playgrounds. The effects on children and young adults viewing adult smokers as role models so close to a playground must not be ignored.

8.) It is inevitable that the proposed new open air extension and its approximately 50 additional covers would generate an extra noise burden in the neighbourhood adding to the already loud noise of the pub's kitchen ventilation fan and adversely affecting the amenity of park users and nearby residents. In addition, the absence of a double sound proofed access door to the balcony would exacerbate the problem, especially if left open for ventilation and convenience of serving.

9.) Local parking provision is limited and the pressure on nearby residents has already increased since the Ship Inn reopened (at 4 times its previous size), especially at weekends and in the evening. This proposal would aggravate the situation with an adverse effect on local residents.

27 September 2010