

# Further Observations submitted by members of the public re- Dog agility and consultation process

**Letter Received 30/11/23**

I refer to the meeting called by the Amenities Committee on 27 November 2023 to discuss the proposal to construct a dog agility area within the Valley Road children's play area. I wish to register my serious objections to this.

The first point is that this proposal seems to have been originally presented by stealth with no opportunity for those principally affected to express their concerns. No attempt was made to contact those residents such as myself whose houses back directly on to the park ( and who have direct access to it with a right of way through a garden gate.) Most of us had less than twenty-four hours notice of the proposal and it

and it was only through the sharp eyes of one of our neighbours who scrutinized the Committee's agenda that we heard about it at all. Council members admitted that they did not plan to consult the residents and Monday's meeting was thus rather grudgingly instated at the last minute. It seems incredible that such a significant proposal, which would lead to a serious loss of amenities for residents of the area, could proceed without consultation. Also, although some residents managed to attend the meeting, several of those who would have liked to do so were aggrieved at being unable to do so because of the short notice

It is also significant that the agenda for the meeting referred to a proposal to consider and **approve this plan**. This would suggest an attempt to railroad the proposal and effectively present the residents with a fait accompli.

It was interesting that in chairing the meeting Councillor Furness was repeatedly insistent that various details of the plan were off limits for discussion even though such details were in the public domain by being printed on the website. This could again be interpreted as attempting to stifle reasonable debate.

It is important to stress that the Council's own notice at the entrance to the park states that **dogs are not permitted within the play area**; so this new proposal is in direct contradiction of their own published intentions.

The park is a treasured asset for local people and young children play there happily and safely throughout the year. Many youngsters are, however, frightened of dogs, especially with recent items in the press about attacks by large and vicious breeds. This will inevitably mean that these children will be deterred from using the park altogether, especially as the available play space will be halved by this proposal.

An increase in the number of dogs would inevitably lead to much more noise both from the animals and their owners, and the resulting mess left by the dogs would not only be most unpleasant but also a serious health hazard.

There would also be a major access problem if dog owners are going to travel to the area in their cars. Most of the local roads are very narrow, especially Valley Road, Cliff Drive and Trent View

Gardens. There is only just enough space for two cars to pass and with an inevitable increase in parking there would be major congestion causing great annoyance to the residents.

There are thus many strong reasons for turning down this proposal.

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**Thur 30/11 17.04**

I shall confine my comments to the management of this proposed amenity, as I believe that other have covered other aspects.

1. At what times will the area be open? if not 24/7, who will open ND SHUT THE GATES?
2. Will the amenity be free of charge? If not, who will collect the fees?
3. if unattended, who will police the number of dogs?
4. Who will be responsible for making sure that the amenity is kept clean and tidy? If an employee. how much will he/she be paid?

i look forward to receiving answers to these queries.

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**Friday 1/12/23 08.39**

Dear Madam,

**Re: The Proposed Dog Agility Area/ Rockliffe Memorial Park near Valley Road Play Area**

This land forms part of the Rockliffe Memorial Park, donated by Mr. Lysle Rockliffe under certain conditions.

I understand that this park of natural beauty was donated as a rest park where people could conduct quiet contemplation.

This proposal so clearly contravenes the wishes of the donor that it should be withdrawn without further discussion, placed in a plastic bag and dropped into the appropriate bin. /

Yours sincerely,

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**Friday 1/12/23 15.03**

Dear Madam Chairman,

**Proposal For Dog Agility Area – Valley Road Play Area**

Our interest in this issue as follows:

We are residents of Trent View Gardens and live in a property [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] We have young grandchildren who enjoy and gain much benefit from playing all over the Valley Road Park, especially on the rough higher ground.

We became aware of this proposal upon receiving an email from the Cliff Drive Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator at 16.17 hrs. on Monday 27 November 2023. Subsequent enquiries in the local area revealed that a consultation meeting about the proposal had been arranged for 18.00 hrs. the same day, which we attended despite less than two hours notice. The meeting was chaired by Cllr. Furniss. I have subsequently learned that this meeting was apparently unofficial and as such not sanctioned by the RoTPC.

We later reviewed the Radcliffe on Trent Totem Pole page on Facebook and found that Cllr. Furniss had earlier made a comment on the site about a proposal for the dog agility area on Valley Road Play Park, to be discussed and approved. This was in response to a question from one of the RoT Totem Pole site administrators about the provision of a possible dog agility area on the (Wharf Lane) Recreation Ground.

We have several concerns about the proposal for Valley Road Play area, which we would like to bring to the attention of the council, as follows:

1. The Valley Road Playground (also known as the Tractor Park) is designated as a play area for children. It is also an area of natural beauty with wildflowers, birds, small creatures and insects. Smaller children enjoy playing on the apparatus, but they and older ones also enjoy playing more energetic games such as Hide and Seek, spotting wildlife and running up and down the hill at the higher end of the park. At a time when we are trying to encourage children to exercise more, and with obesity increasingly becoming a problem, it seems unbelievable to us that there could be any consideration to remove a significant part of this facility from them and allocate it as a dog exercising facility.

We would further add that the play area was gifted to the village by Lisle Rockley “To provide an area for peaceful reflection and enable children to play”.

2. Some children are afraid of dogs and might be discouraged from using even the lower end of the park if numerous dogs are making a lot of noise. There could also be an increased risk of dog attacks on nervous children. Even now dogs at times manage to get out of the park and into the gardens of residents on Trent View Gardens.

3. According to Cllr Furniss it is proposed to use a “pot” of government money amounting to £14,000 to complete this project. This would be used for gates, fencing and play equipment. There seems to be an assumption that this would be the total expenditure and that there would be no ongoing maintenance and running costs. It seems to us inevitable that there would be dog faeces deposited in the park despite the best efforts of owners/minders. The Tractor Park is on a hillside with very uneven ground. It has several trees, many shrubs, wild grasses and flowers. As such it would present serious challenges to maintain the area and keep it clean and we doubt that the existing ground workers would have the capacity to do this. Also, the inevitable contamination of the ground from the dog urine and faeces deposited in the higher “dog agility end” of the park being washed downhill into the lower children’s area, would present a risk of serious disease to the children. It is also likely that there would be smell and noise from the park with adverse effects on the local community.
4. There must be consideration and risk assessment about the environmental impact of implementing this proposal. It is an area of natural beauty with trees, many wildflowers (some possibly rare), grasses, birds and other small creatures. Contamination of the area as discussed in (3) above would undoubtedly have a detrimental effect on this wildlife.
5. There are existing dog exercise facilities locally, but it appears these charge by the hour for use of their resources. Provision of a dog agility area free of charge would in our view lead to many dog owners (including professional dog minders) changing their existing preferred pay-per-hour play areas to the free of charge Valley Road Park, thus exacerbating the problems referred to above. It is likely that the existing dog exercise areas are flat, easy to maintain with staff employed to manage and maintain them . I have not visited these resources, however.
6. At present several people intending to walk their dogs on the Cliff Walk, park their cars on Cliff Drive and access Cliff Walk via the public footpath. A Dog Agility Area would lead to an increase in the number of cars parked on Cliff Drive and Trent View Gardens with associated congestion, noise and pollution. Due to the layout of the entrance to Cliff Drive from Shelford Road, it can already be difficult and even dangerous to enter and exit the road from or on to Shelford Road. An increase in traffic in and out of Cliff Drive due to people coming from all parts of the village and even outside the area, would exacerbate the existing difficulties. We would also like to point out that the public footpath from Cliff Drive to the Cliff Walk is already often contaminated by dog faeces despite an appropriate bin at the end of the path.

We would appreciate it if this letter were presented to the council.

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**Friday 1/12/23 16.04**

Dear Madam Chairman

My husband has already sent an email outlining our objections to the proposal for a Dog agility training area, but I would also like you to ensure this email is put before the parish council and the following comments considered.

I became aware of a so called meeting in connection with the above less than two hours before this meeting was due to take place at 6.00pm Monday evening 27/11/2023. Notification of this meeting had been posted on Facebook the previous day, and it appears that no other methods were used to

inform the residents of this event. This does not constitute “good practice” and excluded certain residents from attending the meeting due to the extremely limited method of communication used.

The Facebook post includes the statement - “The Parish Council is offering the chance for you to ask questions and be consulted on.”

I feel that this implied that the meeting was officially sanctioned by the Parish Council to gauge the support for such a proposal. It would now seem that this was not the case and this was an unofficial meeting convened by Mr Furness himself. I cannot recall any time during this meeting when this was made clear to the residents present. I find it worrying that such a lapse in judgment was made by a member of the parish council and question Mr Furniss’s motives for doing this.

I again refer to the Facebook post which clearly states “The format of the meeting will be a briefing of the project, an explanation of the intent and rationale of the project and time for questions on the project”.

This did not happen in any meaningful way. There was no hard copy of the proposal for the attendees to look at, and the reply by Mr Furniss to certain questions raised was along the lines of “you can access the proposal on line”. He also mentioned that he wasn’t able to discuss the proposal in any detail.

He did suggest that the funding for such a proposal was already available and there was a time limit for obtaining these funds. This would indicate to myself that this proposal process is being somewhat rushed.

I feel that this meeting was not controlled in an organised manner and did not allow sufficient people to express their views. A disproportionate part of the meeting was taken up with a long discussion about parish council protocols with one attendee in particular; resulting in inadequate time for more relevant questions from other people.

Mr Furniss appeared to document some of the concerns raised, but no feedback regarding what he had written was given to the residents.

As a result of the above I believe that this meeting should not have taken place in the manner it did.

It was not a consultation meeting and has left myself worried and disappointed about the actions of this particular member of the parish council regarding this proposal.

I do acknowledge the hard work carried out by members of the parish council on a voluntary basis, and that they sometimes have difficult decisions to make. It isn’t easy to get things right all the time, but rules and regulations need to be adhered to otherwise chaos will ensue.

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**Saturday 2/12/23 06.44am**

Dear Parish Clerk

Objection to Development of Dog Agility Area at Rockley Memorial Arboretum (known as Valley Road Play Area)

We are writing to express significant concern, dismay and objection to the ill-conceived proposal for the creation of a Dog Agility Area within the Rockley Memorial Arboretum (known locally as the Valley Road play area).

As the owners and residents of [REDACTED] By way of background in this context, we moved into Radcliffe-on-Trent and this property approximately ten years ago [REDACTED] We have since made this property our home and the location where we have chosen to raise our family, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The overwhelming factor in our decision to raise our family in our current home was its location, access and proximity to the woodland space which comprises the Rockley Memorial Arboretum Area, the adjacent Valley Road Play area and Cliff Path walk. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] our children have taken great enjoyment from and have spent many hours playing and exploring the wildlife and nature in this location.

This proposal threatens the very existence of this valuable community amenity, which is not only enjoyed by our family and those in the village community but more broadly by residents of all ages who enjoy the peace and access to nature which this space provides. In this sense our initial and fundamental concern is for the safety of our three young children who live at our property and that of other young children, from the local community who utilise the park and woodland area. Beyond this initial and fundamental concern, there are several further key issues which have seemingly been completely overlooked by the Parish Council and which, when evaluated in any detail, evidence the complete unsuitability of the location and the incongruent nature of the proposal in this setting and in the context of the needs of the broader community itself.

#### Existing Land Use

The proposal identifies the Rockley Memorial Arboretum and part of the Valley Road play area as an existing 'under utilised area of public land'. This statement belies a complete lack of understanding of the history of this area of land and of the many current uses adopted by the local community. As noted above, we can personally attest that the area is utilised throughout the year for many recreational activities including den building, wildlife spotting, children's games and as a general place of tranquillity and relaxation.

The Rockley Memorial Arboretum and Valley Road Play Area are listed in Policy 4 of the Radcliffe-on-Trent Neighbourhood Plan as a Local Green Space in accordance with Policy 33 of the Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 2. The planning guidance in this context is abundantly clear; the space is not to be developed for any purpose where such development would cause harm to the space itself and existing biodiversity and wildlife in the particular location. Addressing this specific point, it must be noted that the area supports a diverse range of wildlife, including rabbit, mole, owl and other bird, bat, newt, muntjac, fox, and squirrel populations. The scale of the proposed Dog Agility Area is also disproportionate and entirely incongruous with the existing green space and current play park facilities which are enjoyed by the community. Furthermore the proposal appears to give no consideration (as required under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) to the biodiversity of the area, including wildflower populations, existing trees and other protected plants and moss species which exist in this area. The introduction of the proposed Dog Agility Area would cause irreparable harm and disruption to these delicate ecosystems, leading to habitat loss and detrimental impacts on the local environment.

We would also draw attention to broader planning authority guidance advises that such facilities should be located away from housing or urban areas, specifically not directly adjacent to existing residential properties.

Setting aside any statutory considerations there is a moral and ethical obligation to preserve and protect such areas of biodiversity for the benefit of both present and future generations.

## Noise and other pollution

The proposed location is devoid of any consideration to the noise disturbances which will be imparted upon the neighbouring residential properties. As noted above, there is a clear and logical rationale contained within general planning authority guidance that such facilities will give rise to noise pollution and thus should be located away from existing housing.

Furthermore this area of land was donated to the Parish by the Rockley family specifically as an area for quiet contemplation and commemoration. The facility which this proposal seeks to provide would directly conflict with this purpose and thus is incongruous and unsuitable in this sense.

The proposal is entirely inadequate in its consideration of the risks of and provision for the disposal of dog waste. It is noted in previous Parish Council minutes that there are existing challenges with encouraging responsible dog ownership behaviours and that the adjacent Cliff Path already grapples with the issue of dog waste. It is irrefutable that the introduction of the proposed Dog Agility Area will exacerbate this problem. Furthermore the proposed siting of this facility directly adjacent to a children's play park and established access routes from a large number of private residential properties, in an area of dense grass and foliage is negligent and irresponsible on the part of the Parish Council.

The issue of limited parking in the vicinity also appears to have been overlooked. The creation of the facility in this location will to increase the volume of traffic on constrained, dead end, residential streets, exacerbating pre-existing parking issues on both Valley Road, Trent View Gardens and Cliff Drive (where the majority of properties were originally built during a time when car ownership was at a significantly lower rate to the present day).

The management of these issues would be the responsibility of the Parish Council, who in presenting the proposal have failed to offer any consideration to these issues or cost / demand / benefit evaluation. This is further evidence of the ill-conceived nature of the proposal itself.

## Impact Upon Existing Property Rights and Public Rights of Way

The proposed location raises significant safety concerns due to the close proximity of the Dog Agility Area to the residential properties, whose rear boundaries are predominantly formed by 'open' holly hedges. The suggestion, made within the proposal, that the space will allow activities such as 'frisbee' and 'fetch' highlights the complete lack of consideration of such matters, notwithstanding infringement of the privacy and access rights of the surrounding properties, which would inevitably be compromised through dog incursions into private gardens, stray toys and noise impacts.

The proposed formation of the facility in this location and utilising the existing boundary hedges to the residential gardens of Trent View Gardens as screening for the area give rise to a proposed arrangement whereby the access from the rear gates of the affected properties to the Cliff Path and wider Valley Road is essentially cut off, with said access then being available only through the new Dog Agility Area. This arrangement also clearly infringes upon existing access routes across public land from the rear of properties on Trent View Gardens and Valley Road. In this regard the Parish Council should note that the rear boundaries of the properties on Trent View Gardens which back onto the Rockley Memorial Arboretum have benefited from access gates into this area since the properties were first built in the mid-1960s. These gates accordingly form established access rights for each property under common law and the Prescription Act 1832. In this sense the proposal from the Parish Council would be in direct breach of these established rights.

## Safety

In its proposed location, directly adjacent to the existing Valley Road Play Area, the Dog Agility Area would place young children who are particularly vulnerable and may not fully comprehend the behaviour of dogs, at an elevated risk of dog attack incidents. Additionally, the noise and activity generated by dogs in close proximity to the play area will inevitably cause distress and anxiety for both young children and local residents who utilise the existing play area and Cliff Path facilities.

In considering this aspect of the matter reference must be made to guidance from The Kennel Club, who are accepted as the recognised UK authority on dog health, welfare and training. We would formally and specifically draw attention to their appraisal of such facilities (and specifically public dog parks) as follows;

"While dog parks appear to be a positive solution for dog walkers, there are a number of drawbacks that should be considered. We have general reservations over the use of dog parks within the UK due to a significantly different culture of dog walking compared to North America and Australia, for example, where dog parks are more prevalent. The high concentration of dogs in a small area can lead to an increased frequency in dog on dog attacks and other behavioural problems. If dog on dog or dog on human attacks and injuries arise from interventions like dog parks, liability concerns for councils and land managers can arise."

(<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/about-us/campaigns/access-for-owners-and-dogs/advice-for-local-authorities/>).

We have furthermore studied the proposal in detail and would highlight the inherent trip hazards and risk of personal injury to members of the general public which will arise from the introduction of a number of low level obstacles and significantly a circa 70m long fence directly across an established access route through unlit public open space which is frequently used by walkers, joggers and elder members of the general public in both daylight, low light (dawn and dusk) and night time conditions.

We note that the 70m long fence which forms part of this proposal will create a barrier across the widely used footpath which traverses from the top of the Cliff Path, where this meets with the end of Valley Road, across the land in question and re-joins the Cliff Path at the entrance to the Valley Road Play Area itself. This existing informal footpath is widely used by the general public to circumnavigate the steep gradient of the Cliff Path as this extends up toward Valley Road. The value of the cut through is particularly prominent during Autumn and Winter periods when the steep section of the Cliff Path footpath becomes treacherous and notoriously slippery due to the gradient combined with falling leaves and freezing conditions.

In consideration of the above and good practice design and safety measures, it is apparent that a thorough risk assessment has not been completed in accordance with the legal requirements imposed by Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. It is imperative that the council, both as a client and a designer, fulfils its duties under these regulations to ensure the safety of all park users. With our concerns noted above we would highlight that The CDM Regulations place a legal duty and responsibility on both clients' and designers' who initiate or are involved in construction projects to manage health and safety risks and to ensure health and safety throughout the project lifecycle, including 'in use'. If these duties are breached, through a failing to manage known risk, and there is a subsequent harm or injury caused to third party individuals, the project stakeholders may be held personally liable for their actions or omissions.

All members of the Parish Council should accordingly be aware of the personal liability which they will assume for any resultant injury or harm arising from the proposed siting, design and creation of this facility.

Conduct of the Parish Council

On a final note, it is entirely unacceptable that the proposal has been prepared in absence of any proper consultation with relevant stakeholders, neighbouring landowners, and the wider community. This lack of proper communication is of great concern, as it has not afforded sufficient notice to allow the directly impacted individuals opportunity to provide valuable feedback or to voice their concerns.

We would in this regard note the following timeline of undertakings by the Parish Council in relation to this matter;

- The Parish Council have to date failed to undertake any form of direct consultation with owners of the properties who would be immediately affected.
- The proposal was included as an agenda item on the November Parish Council Amenities Committee, held on Tuesday 21st November. This meeting failed to cover the full agenda and this particular proposal item was deferred to the December meeting.
- An Extraordinary Human Resources meeting was scheduled and held by the Parish Council on Monday 27th November. This meeting was seemingly arranged with the primary intention of offering consultation with local residents in relation to this proposal. Regrettably we only found out about this meeting by chance, after the time of the meeting and through conversation with a neighbour. Had we known of this meeting it would have been our intention to attend to raise our objections. We however understand that the meeting was called and invitations primarily circulated through a private, invite only Facebook group, with no relevance or ties to the affected properties and community.
- The December Parish Council Amenities Committee, to be held on the 5th December, includes an agenda item to cover this proposal. At the time of writing the Parish Council is yet to formally notify the affected owners of this meeting.

The above summary highlights clear and obvious failings in respect of due and proper process, falling far short of the Parish Council's own Code of Conduct. Once matters in relation to the proposal itself have been resolved we intend to raise a formal complaint to the Parish Council in relation to these failings.

#### Conclusion to the objection

In light of the obvious and valid concerns raised, we do not believe that the Parish Council, acting competently, in good faith and in the best interests of the community can take forward the proposal for the creation of the Dog Agility Area within Rockley Memorial Arboretum.

Once our objections have been considered, should the council still consider that such a facility is warranted and in the wider community interest it is incumbent upon the Parish Council to undertake a full and proper option appraisal for alternative viable locations. Subject to proof of demand existing (and being evidenced) it would be our own assessment that more viable options to locate the facility may including repurposing part of the Wharf Lane Recreation Ground (away from private residential properties) – as part of the wider development of that facility, or engaging with the developers of the various new home sites, including Princes Place, Hackett Grange and the Spitfire Homes site as to the availability of any surplus fringe development land.

We would however record in writing and in the strongest possible terms our own reservations as to the value and benefit of such a facility. If upon considering this representation, the council do still consider this to be an appropriate use of significant public funds we would expect openness and transparency as to the basis for which public demand has been assessed and determined, something which is again entirely lacking from the current proposal. We would furthermore expect that any

final proposal is prepared following full, effective and proper consultation with all relevant stakeholders, in order to ensure that the final solution properly considers the potential benefits and detrimental impacts and prioritises the safety of young children, protects the local environment, and address the identified concerns.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We trust that you will give careful consideration to the objections raised. We subsequently look forward to receiving updates on the council's decision and further opportunities for community engagement.

Yours faithfully,

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**Saturday 2/12/23 15.10**

## Proposed Dog Agility Area

(Parish Council agenda item AC24/132 from November 2023)

Dear Cllr Furniss

We are writing to object to the proposed Dog Agility Park on the woodland at the end of Valley Road.

We feel that awareness of the proposed construction of a dog agility area has been inadequate for all Radcliffe residents, not just those living around the Rockley Park Memorial gardens and woodlands area. (aka Valley Road Play area)

We would have liked to have been aware of your proposal much earlier and it does seem that you have been working on this for quite some time and yet we have merely a few days to contribute our responses and questions, which is quite a stressful situation for us.

Rockley Memorial Park, including woodlands, was donated to Radcliffe on Trent in 1927 by Lisle Rockley in remembrance of his son and local servicemen who lost their lives in the Great War. Rockley Memorial Park covers a large area and includes a formal park, cliff walk, woodlands and access to the River Trent.

Mr. Rockley's speech (at the parks opening ceremony) included the following words:

*'Under my scheme I've preserved and developed the woodlands and provided the inhabitants with the rights of access to the river. It was fortunate that Nature provided such a beautiful site to develop – one that is unequalled in Nottinghamshire. The preservation of these cliffs and woods, from which Radcliffe takes its name, appealed to me as a memorial which would endure, be worthy of the sacrifices made and give joy to generations to come. The pleasure I feel in making the gift would be greatly enhanced if I thought it would be appreciated. I would like to thank everyone directly or*

*indirectly involved with the scheme for the help I've received. I ask you to accept this gift with all the love and affection of my wife, my daughter and myself...'*

Nature has done a fantastic job of creating the space as it is now and, due to the generosity of Mr Rockley, it is able to be accessed, used and appreciated by everyone, dog owner or non.

This piece of woodland is preserved for enjoyment of all the community, turning it over to a dog utility area would lead to the loss of habitat and compacted soil/mud and long-term damage to trees.

It is a beautiful section of a beautiful walk. We are blessed that it was gifted to the village.

The area you suggest for dog agility is full of long-established wildlife, with carpets of bluebells and snowdrops, a haven for birds including owls and a place for hedgehogs to inhabit and gather food.

Also, it cannot go unnoticed the natural existence of the numerous long-established trees providing an amazing space for everyone to explore and discover something of a uniqueness in any town or village.

There are also frequent sightings of bats hunting the plentiful supply of insects the established eco system allows for.

All the above will suffer, perhaps to extinction, by the proposed creation of the agility area

Valley Road is narrow and is unable to provide any on-street parking, there is signage to reflect this along the road.

The agility area would create a destination for dogs and their owners, creating higher footfall, potential mess and noise along Valley Road and that end of the memorial park.

Valley Road does already suffer from cars being parked on it by dog walkers and people going to fish on the river. This creates an access issue for emergency services and on refuse collection days, the bin lorries.

It only takes one car parked "on the lane" to prevent bin lorries being able to collect or, as happens more than you would think, emergency services vehicles needing urgent access the lower parts of Valley Road and the cliff top paths and routes to the side of the Trent. (Valley Road is the only vehicular access directly onto to the cliff top area)

Our Village has plenty of existing spaces to exercise dogs, probably why there are a lot of dog owners in Radcliffe.

Is there an alternative, more suitable space for this agility park, such as the Rec as proposed recently on Facebook [REDACTED] [REDACTED]? His proposal is to have a fenced off area in the Rec to enable dogs to go off the lead. There are many positive responses to this suggestion on the Totem Pole Facebook page.

When speaking to dog walkers on Saturday morning at the Rec and along the cliff walk, at least 50 percent of the small sample (approx. 20 people) responded positively to the idea of a dog agility area. Interestingly, all of them emphasised a desire to be able to let their dogs off the lead in a fenced off area but they were not interested in the provision of dog agility equipment.

It's great that the council are responding to complaints of dogs off leads and acting by creating dog zones and putting up signage.

Responsible dog ownership is something to be encouraged for the good of all. Responding to complaints of this nature and encouraging citizens to behave responsibly is part of the role of a local council. This does not mean that the council then become obliged to 'compensate' residents for those rules. If it is felt that the council is very good at telling residents where their dogs can't go, then information about where they can go, such as Rushcliffe Country Park and on leads around the village, is appropriate and adequate.

Additionally, the information boards proposed for the dog agility park could go anywhere in the village i.e. the cliff top walk

Monies for fencing and bench costs to be provided by council - est about £4k. Additional council expenditure is also listed in the proposal, with costs unknown as yet. Is this really a priority for council spending at a time of rising cost of living and a climate emergency? What happens about the Maintenance of area including the fence?

We hope that the dog agility park on the Valley Road end of Rockley Park does not go ahead. If the council decides to move forward with this proposal, could they please provide evidence of the need for a dog agility park – i.e. an independent survey incorporating the whole village? Could the council also please specifically involve the residents directly affected by the agility park's location. None of these things seem to have happened thus far.

Please also consider that it may be the case that what Radcliffe dog-owning residents actually want is simply a fenced-off space to let dogs off their leads.

A dog agility park with the facility you are proposing could be a waste of money.

Our objection is based on the choice of location and the impact to woodland, loss of wild habitat and making an inclusive space for all an exclusive space for the few by the installation of agility equipment.

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## **Saturday 2/12/23 4.02**

I would like to add my voice to the many objections to the creation of a 'dog agility park'.

As a resident of the village but not owning a dog nor living in the vicinity of this proposed dog park, I feel that a creation of said dog agility area is not in the best interests of the many residents of the village but only to a very few dog owners who wish to 'try out' new ideas of exercising their dogs. This park was created many years ago by Mr Lisle Rockley, along with the Rockley Memorial Park also located on the Cliff Walk. These areas were created in the memory of Mr Rockley's son and the men of Radcliffe who had lost their lives during the First World War. He did state that 2 parks would be created one a pleasure park and one a 'rest park'. We can only assume that this rest area is what he had in mind and the pleasure park was the memorial park. I am aware that things have to move on, as with the Rockley Memorial Park, in my childhood days it was very much 'keep of the grass' and no playing games area, which as children we respected. But now we have Picnic in the Park where music is played and families can often be seen picnicing at on the grass so we have learnt to accept this to a certain extent. I personally think that the Valley Road Play Park, which incidentally was provided for by a donation from a well- respected GP who died tragically, together with a contribution from the PC, when play equipment was added, and has been added to since. The rest of this area is full of mature trees where children can run between or climb, in other words run free, plus dogs are supposedly not allowed in this park because of health and safety issues. I know all dog owners say that their dogs are perfectly ok with children and other adults but we all know there are many that react quite frightenly so when in different circumstances. Also this area has a good lot of wild life and this should be encouraged and to erect a fence and include special equipment will surely have a disturbing effect on such wild life. Another aspect is that it could encourage people who live outside the area to bring their dogs to 'try out' the park, and of course with this comes parking issues. I find it amazing that so many dog walkers actually drive to the Cliff Walk in order to exercise their dogs often clogging up the residential roads leading up to the Memorial Park or on Wharf Lane.

I am by no means against dogs but surely when you buy a dog, with it comes huge responsibilities and one of those must be to ensure the dog gets regular exercise, this can come by a walk either on the lead or without, as long as the dog has good recall ability. Providing such a park would I think appeal to a minority of dog owners, most dogs are happy with a walk and catching a ball or stick etc, rather than learning to jump through hoops and crawl through tunnels and climbing up steep boards and running down the other side.

I often enjoy a quiet stroll along the cliff top path and quite often it is disrupted by dogs that have been allowed to run free, with their owners often not aware that this can have a unnerving affect on a person, especially when the dog jumps up.

I am assuming that the creation of such a park would require some felling of existing mature trees, this must not be allowed to happen, we need to retain as many trees as possible. Radcliffe parish council does have a habit of felling trees (recently anyway).

I do wonder how such an area would be policed, especially in the evenings when as we all know anti-social behaviour occurs. Like all the areas in the village(i.e. cemetery, Rockley Memorial park and the Grange) they are never locked up as they used to be. This would be yet another area to perhaps congregate to do whatever teenagers etc do in the evenings! And it is even more remote than the other places I have mentioned.

Final point being the financing of such a project. I cannot see that this project comes under the criteria for Capital Grant Funding. Also it cannot be classed as a village amenity as many people from the Canadian Estate area and The Harlequin would not gain any benefits, only add to the nuisance by travelling by car to access the area. Surely we as a village can spend that sort of money that would benefit the majority rather than the few.

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**Sunday 3/12/23 11.01**

## **Dog Exercising & Agility Area at Valley Road**

**To: The Parish Clerk**

Dear Belina,

I wish to formally object to this proposal (**Agenda Item AC24/132 and supporting Paper Q**) put forward by Councillor Oliver Furniss.

### **Objection 1 – Proximity to Residential Properties.**

The proposed area is bounded directly on two sides by residential properties on Trent View Gardens and at the lower end by one property on Valley Road:-  
-Increased noise and disturbance from barking dogs, their owners calling, shouting or whistling.

-A significant risk of more dogs getting into the gardens of adjoining properties through the hedge, which forms the boundary between the parkland and those properties. There have already been numerous incursions by dogs, both into my own garden and those of my neighbours. This is only likely to increase with (a).more dogs using the area and (b).frisbees and other dog toys accidentally coming over the hedge and dogs trying to retrieve them. This is a safety risk and a matter of serious concern, especially for those families with younger children. In some cases, the dogs don't manage to find their way back through and have even exited onto the road at the front on Trent View Gardens. This whole area of parkland is supposed to be a dog-free zone but some dog owners already blatantly ignore this. By officially opening it up as a dog exercising area, the Parish Council will only be compounding existing problems outlined above.

### **Objection 2 – Irritation and Annoyance posed to a hard-working dog and his owner**

This may sound odd but let me explain. My wife has a guide dog and we have a toileting pen near the bottom of our garden. An essential part of his daily routine is using the pen to do his business in before he goes out to work. This minimises the risk of him of doing it in a public place while on the harness.

Unfortunately, dogs tearing about in the play area behind the hedge just yards away disturb and distract him and he gets agitated. When he returns home from work, he is taken back to the pen to toilet before coming back into the house – same issue again. Needless to say, this problem will get worse if a dog exercising area is located right behind our back garden so it will cause my wife additional anxiety.

### **Objection 3 – Potential Devaluation of Residents’ Properties.**

-Issues outlined at 1 above plus increased risk of litter (no provision for a litter bin near the proposed picnic bench) and the possibility that the area may become another focal point for antisocial behaviour, vandalism and noise at night (as sometimes happens around the play equipment at the other end) are likely to make the area less attractive to house buyers and may reduce property values in the immediate vicinity. For those younger working families especially, who are having to cope with the impact of high interest rates on their mortgages, this proposal must feel like a real kick in the teeth.

-it will also pose a particular problem for those homeowners, who have garden gates and currently enjoy direct access into the parkland – especially families with young children, who would be walking out straight into a dog exercising area. This proposal could be construed as infringing their access rights.

### **Objection 4 – Obstructing a Right of Way**

-it has long been possible to walk across the parkland from the bottom of Valley Road to the Cliff Path by the entry to the Play Area rather than by carrying on down the tarmacked slope to the top of Slack Hollow. While there is a galvanised handrail to the right, that slope can be very slippery in frosty, snowy or icy conditions. Erecting the 70m fence across the parkland would effectively block off this Right of Way.

### **Objection 5 – Spoiling an Area of Natural Beauty and degradation of Radcliffe’s heritage**

-This land was originally given to the community in the 1920’s as part of the Lisle Rockley donation. One of two parks (the other being the formally laid-out Rockley Memorial Park), it was originally intended as a ‘rest park’ – a quiet green space. The area is now mature parkland, the upper section is carpeted with blue flowering bulbs in springtime and the trees attract a variety of woodland birds (including Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Jay and Tawny Owl). Autumn brings a rich colour palette of leaves. This proposal would:-

-disturb wildlife (birds, small mammals and amphibians) through increased dog and human traffic with attendant noise levels

-adversely impact the ground flora by trampling and tearing up the soil

-spoil the character of the area by erecting a 70m wide fence across it, together with 14 pieces of agility equipment and an information board, which would effectively re-purpose and degrade a unique piece of Radcliffe's heritage.

### **Objection 6 – Proposal is in conflict with the Radcliffe Neighbourhood Plan**

The Valley Road Play Area is listed as one of Radcliffe's Local Green Spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan, drawn up in 2016 (and revised in 2022) – see **Policy 4, Page 23** (this and following references as per the original document). It is clear from the Proposals Map 1 (Location 14) in the Appendix that the term 'Valley Road Play Area' refers to the total area of parkland bounded by the hedge and not just to the area surrounding the play equipment. Policy 4 designated Local Green Spaces '*due to their special character and significance and recreational value...These sites will be protected from inappropriate development*'. Also, the **Glossary** in the **Appendix** defines Local Green Space as '*a designation which provides special protection against development on a particular green area which is important to local communities*' – my italics. The revised Neighbourhood Plan states that 'These designated sites should be managed in accordance with policy 33 of the LP:Pt2'. That definition is further clarified there - see **Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 2, Policy 33 Local Green Space, Page 125**. '*Local Green Spaces.... will not be developed for other uses except in very special circumstances. These circumstances will not exist unless the harm to the purpose of the green space, the loss to the local community, and any other harm are outweighed by other considerations*' – again, my italics. It is difficult to see therefore how the Parish Council could agree to building the proposed facility in this area and equally difficult to see how it could be supported by Rushcliffe Borough Council. These are really fundamental matters, which in my opinion should have been carefully considered at a much earlier stage (probably within a Working Group) before detailed proposals for the project were drawn up and placed on the Amenities Agenda 'for discussion and approval'.

### **Objection 7 – Restriction of children's ability to play in a natural outdoor environment**

The original play equipment was installed in the 1970's – again courtesy of a donation from a local GP, Dr. Thomas. The entire area has though for generations been a place where children have been able (and continue) to freely roam and play (hide and seek, build dens, search for conkers etc.). This proposal would effectively reduce the area officially accessible to children to about 40%; the remaining 60% would go to the dogs (quite literally). The parkland would be bisected by a fence – a sort of 'Berlin Wall' to keep the two apart. But would it work? The proposal envisages a 1.2m high picket fence.

An agile breed of dog could easily clear this and older children could probably climb over it the other way. Moreover, there is nothing to prevent children entering the dog exercising area via the gap at the bottom of Valley Road. The close proximity of a large number of dogs running around a confined area could well dissuade families with younger children visiting the play area altogether – there would be no way to control the number of dogs in the exercise area at any one time.

### **Objection 8 – Increased risk to children’s health and safety within the parkland**

This has been partially covered in the point made above. It is inevitable that children *will* get into this proposed exercise area. It is also almost inevitable that there will be an increased amount of dog excrement within there (exercise and excitement often stimulate dogs to defecate):-

-there is no provision for a litter/dog waste bin within this facility. Experience locally shows that a number of owners are not willing to walk any distance to a bin and often dump poo bags and contents either on the ground, in hedge bottoms, over hedges or hang them in trees.

-when a dog defecates within even a short distance of the owner into leaf litter especially, it becomes extremely difficult to locate and clear up (believe me, I’ve had 40 years’ experience in this field!).

-inevitably traces of excrement will remain on the ground, especially if the faeces is soft or runny and this does present a direct health hazard to children. This can range from stomach upsets caused by bacteria in the faeces to the worst case of Toxocariasis, a condition caused by a parasitic worm present in the faeces of unwormed dogs; if the worm enters the eye via hand contact, this can lead to sight loss or even blindness.

### **Objection 9 – Flawed Rationale see ‘Rational (spelling error), Background & Scope’**

Some of the claimed benefits of dog agility areas are highly debatable and difficult to substantiate but I will simply take issue here with the following statement (my italics):-

*‘The Parish Council has identified a space currently underutilised behind the Valley Road play area, it is an ambition to develop this area specifically for dogs. The area has a high volume of footfall, especially dog walkers and this project would help distribute amenities further around the village.’*

-this implies that there has already been some collective policy decision about this specific area and its future development. So, please inform me at what point this was taken by **the Parish Council** as I am not aware that the issue has yet been discussed by the Amenities Committee.

-this space *is* currently well utilised as a natural woodland play area (see **Objection 5** above), play is not confined to the physical play equipment and the area immediately surrounding it.

-it is suggested that this project would alleviate dog problems elsewhere in the village by *distributing amenities*. However, it is unlikely that owners who bring their dogs to the Wharf Lane Recreation Ground (e.g. from the Canadian Estate) would walk all the way up to Valley Road or that those from across the A52 would forsake Dewberry Hill to do the same – unless of course they chose to drive up by car to the nearest access points. This would inevitably cause parking problems, most probably at the top of Cliff Drive / junction with Trent View Gardens – vehicles near a ‘blind’ corner and possible pavement parking, opposite Valley Road (limited space) or on Valley Road itself (private road).

-a *net influx*, rather than a redistribution of dogs, might be the outcome. There is a definite increase in dog ‘parks’, some in our own locality and with agility equipment (e.g. off the A52 opposite Upper Saxondale at St. James’ Business Park (Radcliffe-on-Trent Dog Walking Field) and just outside Cropwell Bishop off the A46 (Cropwell K9s). These are private businesses, fenced off, secure and well away from residential housing. Users pay to book a slot. It is highly conceivable that a brand new free-to-use facility in nearby Radcliffe-on-Trent would attract additional dog tourism and certainly be a magnet for dog-walking businesses bringing several animals at a time.

#### **Objection 10 – Deficiency in Funding Arrangements**

-These focus solely on the capital cost of installation and ignore future revenue expenditure requirements for upkeep, maintenance and repair. These are clearly more difficult to quantify but are very real and the Parish Council will need to budget for them. Some estimate of these costs, say over the next ten years, should have been included in the proposal. A key element of this will be the careful and regular inspection of the facility, which could be time-consuming. Will this be undertaken ‘in-house’. If so, is the Parish Council’s Grounds Maintenance Team adequately staffed, given its already long list of commitments?

#### **Objection 11 – Overall Value for Money?**

According to the figures supplied, estimated capital cost of the facility would be around £14,000, £10,000 to be sought from external funding (UKSPF/REPF), £4,000 to be contributed by the Parish Council. It is unclear what financial support (if any?) is being sought from Rushcliffe Borough Council itself but the wording of the Agenda Item indicates that the external funding request would need to be made via RBC. To put it bluntly though, humans come first and canines come second. There must be far more worthwhile projects in

Radcliffe-on-Trent to target this level of money at. Rather than provide ‘a specific space for dogs to exercise and socialise within the village’, I suggest we need to strike out the word ‘dogs’ and replace it with ‘young people’ perhaps?

### **Objection 12 – Lack of a proper external Consultation Process**

Despite my request at the Amenities Meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> November, I am unaware that Councillor Furniss has attempted to contact or consult with residents in the Trent View Gardens / Valley Road area (i.e. those most directly affected by his proposal). Instead, he posted a general invitation via his Facebook account on The Fountain last Sunday, November 26<sup>th</sup> to a meeting at The Grange for 6 p.m. the following evening – little more than 24 hours’ notice. I and quite a few (though not all) of my neighbours found out about this at very short notice. Unfortunately, even for those of us who did manage to attend, this did not prove to be an informative meeting:

- no detailed plans, photographs or any other relevant printed material relating to the proposal were made available to members of the public, either to view / discuss or to take away. Attendees were simply referred to the Parish Council’s website, where this was available on-line. This made any form of discussion very difficult.

- Councillor Furniss repeatedly stressed that he was only there in a capacity to gather residents’ views, insisting that he was unfortunately unable to discuss details of his plans (even though these had been published on the Council’s own website and were therefore already in the public domain).

- Most of his responses were qualified and preceded by an apologetic statement explaining that he, a sincere and hard-working individual, had been restricted by others. He referred to local government regulations and the Chair of the Council.

I and my neighbours all felt the meeting was highly unsatisfactory and fell far below the standards we would expect of a proper public consultation. It did nothing to allay our concerns that the real aim was to fast-track this project through the Parish Council, largely behind our backs.

### **Objection 12 – Lack of a proper internal Consultation Process**

This proposal was originally submitted to the Amenities Committee at the 21<sup>st</sup> November meeting, the intention being to gain approval for the concept (*and* effectively the detailed plan), the funding application and onward submission of the latter to Rushcliffe Borough Council. Note the word **consider** appears once in the body of the text (AC24/132), the word **approve** appears three times.

I objected in the public forum to the fact that there had been no consultation with residents likely to be directly impacted by the proposal and also pointed

out that, although the Agenda had been published some days before, the supporting papers had only been posted on the Parish Council's website that very morning so the general public had had barely any time to study the proposal in detail, if at all. I reiterated that point at the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> where Councillor Furniss admitted that parish councillors had also received them at the same time. It would not therefore have been possible for many of them to properly digest and scrutinise either this or the many other proposals on that Agenda (35 Agenda Items overall, 22 for either 'consideration' or 'consideration and approval'). Despite this the Chair of Amenities, Councillor Oliver Bere, pressed on with what he referred to in his opening comments, rather euphemistically, as 'an action-packed agenda'. Council Chairman Anne Mcleod's intervention to propose shortening the agenda provoked angry exchanges, Councillor O. Bere walked out and Councillor Furniss then berated Councillor Mcleod for effectively destroying the meeting. Such acrimony can only be detrimental to Council proceedings so, in my view:-

**-Agendas need to be of a manageable length to permit adequate discussion and debate.** Supporting papers need to be published along with the agenda to give both councillors and the general public a good chance to study them and prepare relevant comments and questions in advance of the council meeting.

**-An improved level of scrutiny is required before an item is admitted to the Agenda requesting approval.** In some cases, this is achieved via a Working Group but in this case a significant and potentially controversial proposal appears to have been worked through to 'final submission' stage by an individual councillor. An external third party also seems to have been involved. Radcliffe RSPCA is described as "a willing partner and supporter of the project" but where were the internal checks to ensure that:-

(a). the proposal did not conflict with existing Parish Council plans and policies  
(b). the proposal broadly complied with the Rushcliffe Local Plan (especially since RBC's involvement with the funding application would be critical to its success).

(c). the proposal contained an impact statement and, in this case, a proper risk assessment

(d). if (c). identified a particular group of residents or section of the community that might be directly affected by the proposal, then their views had been sought via an appropriate (and more direct) means of consultation.

This whole sorry episode has caused much consternation here among us and our neighbours and, I believe, within the wider Radcliffe community. We have to place trust in our parish councillors that they will, individually and

collectively, exercise due diligence and behave in a selfless, careful and considerate manner. That trust has been badly dented on this occasion. Overzealous behaviour by one or two individuals can unfortunately tarnish the public image and reputation of the whole Parish Council.

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### **Sunday 3/12/23 22.03**

I write to formally object to the proposal placed in front of the Amenities Sub Committee, to repurpose/redevelop most of the existing Rockley Memorial Arboretum area in order to establish a 'Dog Agility Attraction' at public expense.

I'm aware that very many other objections have been raised against this proposal by residents across the village, and organisations who are impacted, both being equally applaud by the proposer's near complete lack of perspective, historical, environmental, and procedural knowledge in regard to this matter.

So in many aspects, to avoid over duplication, I simply refer out to the views that others have already raised with the Parish Council Clerk.

However, firstly I'd like to apologise for the very many times I have considered expressing my views in writing to the Parish Council and have not done so.

As a long term resident of this beautiful and well-kept village I have spent many years enjoying its walks, parks, hanging baskets, Christmas lights, and the many more facilities provided, enabled, and supported by Parish Councillors both past and present.

It is common, but most unfair that letters of appreciation are much less likely to be penned than are complaints and objections.

I will seek to improve my behaviour in regards to this.

However, all is not perfect in this village, people occasionally drop litter, park inconsiderably, children are sometimes noisy, and yes dogs sometimes jump up at people, and poo in unexpected places whilst their owners are not looking.

If you would be kind enough to identify a village as nice as this one, where such imperfections do not exist, I'd consider moving there. However I'd probably not consider it for long, because on reflection it would likely be a place devoid of humanity, personality, variety, and diversity.

Secondly, I'd like to address what I see as the root cause of the need to raise this formal objection.

The judgement required of all those who serve in public office (elected or appointed) is to consider carefully, based on proper evidence whether the severity and impact of such imperfect occurrences

is of a level that public expenditure is justified, and/or existing established facilities are in real need amendment or withdrawal.

Prior to May this year, when 'new blood' flowed into our village public administration, I'd never felt cause to strongly object to the actions of our Parish Council, nor the means by which it has sought to conduct its business.

New public servants are most welcome, and it is appreciated that they have a steep learning curve in front of them, and need the support of others around them to rise to the tasks in hand.

Each year some Parish Council seats are vacated/recontested and this marks a transition point between a popularity seeking nomination/election phase, and for those successfully appointed, by a move to a collaborative working phase in order to serve within a coherent body for their entire term of office.

It would appear, and in my view is the case, that the proposer of this deluded horrendous 'Land and Cash grab' has yet to effectively commence this transition, and continues to act seeking personal popularity and to enhance his own profile, by latching onto any opportunity local Facebook offers to project himself as a person of buccaneering spirit acting alone, against internal Parish Council opposition, to please anyone too naive to see that in fact he's a 'loose cannon' bringing the entire Parish Council and its membership into disrepute.

By a process regarded a secretive by many, he floods the Amenities Subcommittee agenda with his proposals to simultaneously 'Consider and Approve' a shopping list of spending items, having apparently failed to previously seek support and advice from more experienced colleagues and council staff. (Consider, pause, Reflect, pause, Decide, would seem more appropriate.)

Given that he has two other close family members on that same committee, maybe he feels it easier to employ their block vote to 'bulldoze' his ill-considered proposals to approval.

As time did not allow this approach to succeed within November's meeting, and despite assurances to consult with people impacted by his proposals, no communication were made to the residents in the impacted locations.

Later, upon receiving emails from concerned residents, he will have become aware that his documents published on the council's 'public facing' web site had been seen. Only then did he attempt an 11<sup>th</sup> hour communication exercise. This only via Facebook invitation, at very short notice, from his personal profile, purporting to be chairing an official Parish Council Public Consultation Meeting. (please see attached)

Even then, by error or deliberate obfuscation, the proposer failed to reveal the location of his proposal for a dog agility attraction, and perhaps sought to misdirect the public in this regard by also including an completely different Parish Council proposal at its excellent Wharf Lane site on the same agenda.

I believe that in reality, neither of these proposals are as yet formally before the full Parish Council, but that is not how they have been represented by the proposer, nor to a significant extent, understood by those who saw his FB post, and by good fortune were able to attend his meeting at such very short notice.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> November the Admin of 'The Totem Pole' Facebook page (Ricky Cotton), posed a general open question suggesting the creation of a fenced area for off-lead dogs within the Rec at Wharf Lane. The area he suggested does not seem unreasonable, nor overly controversial. (However I offer no opinion of my own)

75 comments were subsequently posted in response, many being little more than 'one liners', but in the main the more considered ones were generally supportive of this early stage idea.

However, it is clear that this 'simple' ask from those seeking a facility, didn't align with Cllr Furniss's (as then) undisclosed grand plan to deliver much more than they wanted, at a location far away from where they wanted it, and a greater cost, to be met from someone else's purse. Please see the attached cartoon that epitomises this experience commonly seen in public life.

He did reply on FB (in a manner that suggests the idea was made to him alone) that he was putting his proposal for a dog agility park to the RoTPC AC on the 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. claiming (falsely I feel) the "funding is there to be had!" - "Watch this space, and come and support it".

As far as I'm aware no member of the public attended the November AC to support his proposal, which subsequently due to a meeting overrun and (as I note from the official minutes) a chairman 'walk out', resulted in that item and others being deferred until the 5<sup>th</sup> dec.

In retrospect, it is most concerning that as a serving member of a public body, he chose only to disclose his proposal to a subset of the local population most likely to be supportive of his ambitions, whilst at the same time concealing them from those who would be impacted by it. I believe this could be described as gerrymandering.

And now the key point:

What processes exist to 'onboard' new Parish Council Members, how are they supported, trained and their behaviour monitored, whilst they learn to grow into their new role ?

How are these onboarding events delivered, and are they mandatory ?

Has the proposer as yet completed these, and if so why do they appear to have been so ineffective?

I feel this is the key point, because had this major change proposal been handled in accordance with the 'Nolan principles for public service', we wouldn't all (Residents, Councillors and staff alike) be having to expend so much time, effort and energy responding to a proposal, had an earlier feasibility study been collaboratively undertaken.

Thirdly my Objection itself.

Use of Public Money.

Public money, is public money, no matter what its source, a claim that "funding is there to be had!" is not a justification to spend it unwisely.

The view that money will be won from the government's much heralded 'Levelling up Fund', (UKSPF) is laughable. Such funds that are available are to be used to :-

Boost productivity, Pay, Jobs & Living standards by growing the private sector. Local regeneration, businesses and employment and skills. ( no mention of funding for 'dog agility toys' nor 'Pesky Pet Parasite' notice board installations )

- a) In the unlikely event the RoTPC would achieve the desired £10k UKSPF funding, it would still have to find it's own (Council Tax funded) money for the ongoing running costs.
- b) RoTPC will need to fund an appropriate upgrade to their boundary hedges to the East & South, to prevent dog access into approximately a dozen private house rear gardens. Considered to extend for approx. 125m
- c) RoTPC will need to fund an appropriate upgrade to their boundary hedge to the North, to prevent dogs exiting the propose area onto the public path between the vehicle access barrier, to the junction of the Cliff walk and the Stack Hollow steps. Considered to extend for approx. 90m
- d) Vehicle access is required to the area for the Parish Council staff and contractors, this is currently enabled via a gap in the above hedge. This gap will need to be replaced with an appropriately sized lockable gate for authorised Vehicle access, which gives rise to both the need to manage and control the allocation of keys for official use, and denies access to emergency services. RoTPC will need to assess the impact and costs involved.
- e) Adjacent to the above, a clapper gate (or similar) will need to be installed to provide access for dogs and their owners to the facilities newly provided for them, whilst also preventing them, once off lead, to return in the same direction. RoTPC will need to assess the costs involved
- f) RoTPC will need to assess the increase costs of maintaining hedges, grass areas, and trees as a result of dividing one large area into two.
- g) RoTPC will need to provide Dog waste bins, litter bins, and support the ongoing collection and management costs of these.
- h) RoTPC will need to assess the increase costs of securing changes to Policy 4 of the Radcliffe-on-Trent Neighbourhood Plan. (Local Green Space order)
- i) RoTPC will need to assess the increase costs of securing changes to Policy 33 of the Rushcliffe Local Plan Part 2. (Planning Guidance)
- j) RoTPC will need to assess the increase costs of securing compliance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981)
- k) RoTPC will need to assess the increase costs of existing 'Rights of Access' from rear gardens, in compliance with the Prescription Act 1832.
- l) RoTPC will need to assess the year on year costs of all of the above.

I see no estimate for the costs for any of these items, nor any indication as to where such funding as is required would be obtained from.

Note. I have trouble with reading and writing, I was said to be thick at school (the term dyslexic was not around then). I am most certainly not in any position to criticize typo's made by others.

However, the use, below figure 9 in the proposal, of the phrase "*also undertake other activities such as catch and freebee etc.*" possibly indicates what the proposer was really thinking in regard to funding issues when drawing up this proposal.

Environmental concerns.

- a) Almost every objector has covered this topic in detail, so I'll add little here myself other than to fully agree with them. However I do have a list of 40 birds, mammals and amphibians commonly seen within the area of the proposed change. (this is available upon request)
- b) The above don't go hungry, so the quantity and diversity of the insect populations can only be guessed at.

- c) Existing grasses and wildflowers, and community planted schemes exist within the area to be redesignated. What research and impact assessment has been performed in regards to these please?
- d) This area drains slowly, and is often very muddy after moderate to heavy rain. Kids in wellies love this aspect of this land that is to be lost to them. They cause little surface damage, whereas excited running dogs will over time turn this beautiful area into an eroded, soil damaged, polluted area. (see Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981).
- e) You might agree that water 'tends' to drain downhill. In which case, we could also agree that water runoff from this dog polluted area will run directly into the smaller area where children are still permitted to play (but not adventure), which is certain to provide a situation injurious to health and may expose RoTPC to potential resulting prosecution on health & safety grounds. What public body would want to place themselves in such a position?
- f) By my count, approximately three dozen trees exist in the area which is to be enclosed, the vast majority being UK native woodland trees which have reached maturity, the remainder being younger ones that have been planted to replace those lost due to aging, that have had to be removed by contractors over the last decade under the Parish Council's duty of care of public spaces.
- g) Some fellow residents have suggested to me that the above indicate a hidden agenda. EG to remove/lessen the PC's liability for such duty of care costs. Their view is the £14K spent now, allows them to divide the area, bringing to an end the right of way created by Rockley around 1920 and protected under the Prescription Act 1832. Then at such time when there is a desire not to fund the duty of care responsibility, it'll be easier to withdraw the dog facility and deny any public access to the enclosed area than it would to do so if full public access was still in place. A robust assurance that this is not the case would be most welcome.

#### Morality.

- a) In addition to being grateful to someone who gifts a public body a highly valuable (and valued) legacy, it is expected that the intended use would be respected.  
In addition to the formal Rockley Memorial Park (off Rockley Ave), the cliff path from the bend in the river Trent to the weir, Lisle Rockley also donated land and funded tree planting in the area subsequently known as Valley Road in the 1920's. He planted one of them himself, on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1929, a brass plaque attached to the large Oak tree behind the swings, commemorated this prior to being lost/stolen following tree surgery.  
Whilst Rockley Park is in memory of the dead of WW1, in particular his own son. The area now known as Valley Road Play Area, was, in a move rather ahead of his time, provided for the 'mentally damaged', (today we would use the kinder term PTSD suffers) to allow for quiet time of reflection, and to allow children a place to play.

With this in mind, I'd support the provision of a bench or similar, with litter bin, at the higher end of the park for use by those in need of a quiet place to sit and enjoy nature in these stressful modern times.

Further to the above, it's not unusual to see carers and/or relatives from the nearby care homes pushing wheelchair users to the edge of this area.

They seldom attempt the steep and often slippery tarmac path down towards Stack Hollow steps. A proposal for a place for them to sit alongside, or nearby their less able loved ones would be much more in keeping with the Rockley legacy than is a dog recreation area, which will destroy, or at least badly impact the existing facilities for nature and play alike.

However such a proposal possibly doesn't generate the required amount of supportive 'heat' that motivates the 'please the FaceBook users' approach to modern village administration.

- b) In the event that 'Levelling Up' money were to be secured for this proposal, could the proposer (or any other Parish or District Councillor) look in the eyes of anyone in a similar public service role in (say) Worksop, (thinking of the impact of Wilko closing its HQ there recently) or elsewhere, and feel good about the use they wish to put the money to? or maybe those in a nearby Nottinghamshire village where their church is visited more often as a foodbank than a place of worship. If so, a plaque should also be erected "In memory of the greed of the public servants of this very privileged village."
- c) In a world where we need more than ever to educate ourselves, and our children & grandchildren to the need to protect the natural world, could we live with the knowledge that we deprived our young of a pleasant safe area where their nascent nature explorer skills could be developed.
- d) In 1984, the book by George Orwell, (not the year), the population was ruled by a Government whose department names were the opposite of their actions, for example, the 'Ministry of Peace' was responsible for the state of permanent war. 'The Ministry of Plenty' oversaw the [rationing](#) of food etc. Looking to 2024, how then should we rename an Amenities Committee that had agreed to the removal of a play area from children, an open green space accessible to those in need of one, and a jewel of nature in a landscape increasingly being covered in concrete and artificial lawns?

#### Practicality.

- a) The proposer is planning the installation of a 1.2m high 70m long cheap wooden 'eyesore' fence across the entire width of this much loved amenity. I'd give it a year, maybe two at most before it needs replacing (its removal and replacement costing more than the initial provision.) The proposer misses the point that a large agile dog will easily clear this height at speed whilst chasing a thrown ball, frisby, or a child playing on the other side of it.
- b) Two unrelated commercial businesses already offer such an area very similar in nature and size to that proposed, adjacent to the village, at a cost (according to their website) of £3, for upto three dogs for thirty minutes. The proposer is suggesting that we undermine these businesses by publicly funding a free to use alternative 24/7/365. These business have sited themselves well away from residential properties, create no nuisance, they provide a manager on site during opening hours, clean it at the end of business (and more often when needed), close and lock it after dark, and surround it with a two metre steel fence. They have also full planning approval and meet all the required health & safety regulations for their sites (Lower Saxondale & St James park) and have unlimited public liability insurance. By contrast, the proposer offers no management of :- operational hours, no cleaning, no limit on the number of dogs allowed at any one time, no fencing other than the existing 'open holly hedges' which are in the main is 60+ years old, and present no barrier to even the least agile of dogs, no help in the certain event of dog on dog attack, nor (God forbid) dog on child attack. The proposer make no mention of the need for public liability insurance, planning approval, nor H&S requirements.
- c) The proposer states that the RSPCA locally are a willing partner and supporter of the project. The proposer has not indicated whether, nor how much funding the RSPCA have indicated they will be willing to contribute to the £2k cost of purchasing a 1 metre high 750mm wide double sided notice frame within which they will have control of the

information displayed. If, as I suspect their contribution to the purchase, and maintenance costs is in fact £0, then I'm not at all surprised that they are a willing supporter of the project. Who wouldn't be in their position. I note that this has become a 'project' at this stage, rather than a 'proposal', (interesting.)

- d) I have attempted to contact someone within the RSPCA (whose work against the cruel treatment of any animal I fully support).  
I was unable to identify anyone willing to provide comment in regard to this proposal to reduce, damage or impair existing amenities currently enjoyed by children and those who value the natural habitat. I think that they may have 'smelt the wind' and sense only reputational damage ahead should they be seen to be involved in such a controversial 'Land and Cash grab'.  
I do hope that the Full Parish Council will take that same view should this proposal succeed to the stage that it becomes formally visible to them.
- e) The Kennel Club, who are accepted as the recognised UK authority on dog health, welfare and training, provide advice to local authorities considering establishing such facilities.  
*"While dog parks appear to be a positive solution for dog walkers, there are a number of drawbacks that should be considered. We have general reservations over the use of dog parks within the UK '( )' The high concentration of dogs in a small area can lead to an increased frequency in dog on dog attacks and other behavioural problems. If dog on dog or dog on human attacks and injuries arise from interventions like dog parks, liability concerns for councils and land managers can arise."*  
(<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/about-us/campaigns/access-for-owners-and-dogs/advice-for-local-authorities/>).

In conclusion.

As I approach my 70's, the same age that Lisle Rockley was when he planted the now large Oak tree to the rear of the swings within the 'Tractor Park' in 1929, I recall that I first played here aged 10 or 11 years old, long before the tractor was installed. That I've lived next to this well used beautiful area for more than half my life and intend to remain here. I feel most protective towards this wonderful local facility, free for all to use dawn to dusk and on special occasion (when exam results need celebrating) well beyond (a local tradition).

I pick litter, occasionally provide first aid, make 999 calls when needed (twice so far), remove graffiti where possible, and challenge those I see acting to spoil the ongoing enjoyment of this legacy we are all so lucky to share.

However, never in all my time here have I encountered anyone as intent on causing harm to our collective inheritance than is our unelected counsellor Oliver Furniss, and his family led Amenities Committee. The former looks upon natural beauty, but sees only opportunity, feels that children's play should be restricted to formally installed structures only. Sees a desire and possible need for a facility in the centre of our village, and seeks to place it here instead.

He lives [REDACTED] off Shelford Road and yet fails to see the joy and delight that this wooded park land provides to the young families, teenagers and elderly that have joined our collective community from that very same estate. He seems to regard public funding in place to address poverty and deprivation, as being available for his pet project (pun unintended). How very unlike Lisle Rockley can one be ?

The term Counsellor implies wisdom and judgement, however the observed actions indicate the complete opposite, Oliver Furniss's name will be well remembered around these parts, and quite likely also by the dog owning community around the Rec to which he has over promised and (so far) delivered nothing. I for one look forward to seeing his name on a ballot paper.

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**Sunday 3/12/23 22.27**

Dear Maddam Chairman,

Please may I express my thanks to Belina for the response to my original query below. I was able to attend a consultation event setup by cllr Furniss on 27th November 2023. Sadly Cllr Furniss was unable to provide any clarity to the points I raised, or any of the points raised by other concerns residents. I do not feel that this can constitute a consultation event when the plans set out are lacking significant levels of detail, and Cllr Furniss was told he was unable to expand on these details, once the meeting had started.

I wish to express my firm objection to the proposals set out in AC24/132 Paper Q for a dog training and agility area in Valey Road Park. The reasons for my opposition are as follows:

1. I feel that proposal has demonstrated a complete misunderstanding of how the park is currently used as a children's play area. Whilst the children's play equipment is only located in one part of the park, the other areas are still heavily utilised by children and young people. You only need to visit the park to see that there are dens build around trees, and that there are children and families utilising the full park. To suggest that over 50% of the park is taken from children to provide a dog agility area raises significant concerns for me. The proposal gives no consideration as to the impact it will have on children and young people and makes no proposal for alternative access to outdoor space.
2. The proposal plans for a single picket fence to be built between the children's play area and the dog agility area. This poses significant health and safety concerns. If you are to consider the dog agility area at Rushcliffe County Park, firstly this takes the footprint of around 2% of the park, compared to 50% of the valley road proposal, but this dog ability area is placed a long way away from the children's play area. adjoining the two is an accident waiting to happen. What happens if the fence is damaged. Whilst waiting for repair neither part of the areas are secure and safe to use.
3. The rear of my property backs onto Valley Road Park, and I have a back gate that would sit within the boundary of the dog agility area. I have two small children and i already frequently have dogs come into my garden, due to the boarders being natural. Dogs are able to then get gain access on to Trent View Gardens, then find themselves lost. On three occasion in the past year i have needed to call owners to collect their dogs from my property. In addition there are also occasions where owners are aware that there dogs have come into my garden, and have themselves then entered my property. The proposals make no suggestion as to how they would make safe the adjoining properties. I would suggest given that all boundaries are natural I am not

the only resident to have dogs coming into my garden. I would have significant concerns if this proposal was to go ahead that the frequency of dogs coming into my property would increase. I would also have concerns at the increase in cost of the project should it be implemented in a safe manner.

4. Valley Road Park is an area of outstanding natural beauty, there are wild flowers and the proposed area provides a natural habitat to animals such as bats and frogs. The proposals show no demonstration that a ecological survey has been even considered, to asses the impact on this area.

5. The proposed site is not accessible for all village residents, and will increase traffic into the local roads, Trent View Gardens, Valley Road, Cliff Drive. Again, the proposal make no reference to the impact on local residents. I would highlight that Cliff Drive already has a number of cars parked along it for cliff top access. This reduces the road to a single lane road, and there are a number of near misses daily due to this. These roads would struggle to accommodate the additional traffic.

6. I understand the proposals are as a result of complaints around dog fouling and uncontrolled dogs. The proposals provide no details on how the dog agility area will reduce dog waste, or uncontrolled dogs. This proposal moves a concern from one area of the village to another, and doesn't address the core issue. I would have real concerns as to the increase in fouling, rubbish, noise but ultimately this proposal demonstrates a lack of consideration to the safety of young and vulnerable residents of RoT.

I would appreciate if these concerns can be shared will the committee.

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**Monday 4/12/12 9.28**

To the Clerk to the Radcliffe on Trent Parish Council

**Re: Proposal for Dog Agility Area – Valley Road Play area**

(Amenities Committee Meeting scheduled for 5 December 2023 Agenda item AC24/132 PaperQ

I am very much against the proposed plans for a dog agility area within / next to the Valley Road Childrens play area (also known locally as the Tractor Park) and wish to object to this proposal.

We have been lucky enough to have lived in this area for the last 30+ years and I cannot express enough how much we and our children/grandchildren have enjoyed this unique outside space along with many many other local families during this time.

It's not just the play area with the swings, tractor, and trim trail etc that attract large number of families but also and to a large degree the wooded area that is now being proposed for a dog agility area. If this was to go ahead it would deny many families the freedom for adventure that this area currently holds – Many activities are enjoyed here during the year including children excitedly looking for conkers, watching the squirrels, finding frogs etc and playing games of hide and seek among the many trees and Den building etc. This wooded area has many wild flowers including a spectacular blue carpet effect in the spring that attracts a lot of attention from local people.

This whole area is a wonderful asset to the village and is certainly not “a currently underutilised space behind the valley road play area” as stated in the draft proposal.

It is extremely concerning to me that local residents especially people in the homes immediately backing onto the proposed dog agility area and those living on the surrounding streets where traffic

would certainly impact were Not Consulted on this proposal at any stage and only found out through the kind action of others who were able to alert people that this was being proposed.

Its horrifying to think of this beautiful natural wooded area with its well-established trees, a natural habitat for wildlife and beautiful wildflowers, is now under a proposal to be separated into 2 separate areas by a fence with dog agility equipment at an enormous cost both financially and to the local families who will subsequently be unable to use this space. There is no other area like this in Radcliffe or the surrounding area which is why it is so popular with local people.

A Dog agility area next to a play area! Dogs will be able to run free in the proposed new dog area which will likely mean faeces are left behind and will be under leaves etc. This area can get very wet and is on a slope risking dog faeces being washed down into the lower ground play area which could lead to a serious health hazard.

This proposal is very likely to attract many people from further afield being able to use a 'free' facility that enables dogs to run free encouraging professional dog walkers with multiple dogs at a time to visit the area. How will people access this area? It will inevitably lead to increased traffic and parking problems for people in the Valley Road / Cliff Drive areas and any subsequent roads with access to the cliff path. The car parking on the roads that allow access to the cliffs is very difficult at times already so this proposal will only exacerbate the situation.

If this funding plus any further expenditure that would have occurred relating to the proposed project is available, I feel it should be used elsewhere in a project that everyone in the Community can have benefit from and not take away from spaces that are already in my opinion perfect as they are.

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