

Letter sent March 2021

To whom it may concern,

I am the Chair of Seesaw Pre-school and due to my work rota I am unfortunately unable to attend the meeting on Tuesday so I have prepared a written statement sharing my thoughts on the proposed proposal.

What has been proposed only seems to take into account the Galfrid School siblings that attend Seesaw and not the children that attend that have siblings at Teversham and Fen Ditton. Moving us further away from these Primary schools means that the children attending are not accessing their full entitlement as they are missing out on valuable time at both the beginning and also the end of the session as they are having further to travel between settings.

These children are accessing Seesaw because Fen Ditton village doesn't have any under 5s provision available and even though Teversham has an early years provision they do not offer 30 hours funding.

By moving us further away from our previous area, children from the deprived area like Thorpe Way/Jack Warren Green are also finding it difficult to access their child's full funded hours as they have further to travel. When on Newmarket Road, it was a shorter walk for them and we found that they were accessing their full 15 hours, as opposed to just the 12 (two full days). We were 'on the way' before and now we are situated out of the way with no parking for parents, we are not visible to all and new prospective parents do not know we exist. These combined issues mean that the Galfrid/Fields site is not a suitable long-term option for Seesaw.

The Portacabin was suggested to us as a short term solution whilst the new centre was built. Now we are full Monday - Thursday (24 children per session) with only having 8 spaces left on a Friday the portacabin is becoming noisy and loud which in turn affects children's behaviour and speech and language development. From a quality of provision, and based on the children's best interest point of view, we do not consider the portacabin a long-term option.

Until the last meeting on the 11th February, it was always on the cards that Seesaw would be part of the new building. Previous to that then there was no suggestions otherwise, this came as great surprise to us all. Also at that meeting it was suggested that us moving to the new building was a disadvantage, I was surprised to hear this as that wasn't what we voiced and that was added after our conversation with Jo German. We feel very strongly that being part of the new 'Community Centre' would enable our families to access various other services like the library and other family groups especially for our 'hard to reach' families who gain trust in us allowing us to support them.

I thank you for your time and I hope you consider our views when making a decision on the future of Seesaw Pre-school.

Yours sincerely

Jo Brasher
(Chair of Seesaw Pre-school)

10th October 2021

Response to document “Delivery of Early Years Provision to serve Abbey Ward” presented to the Children and Young People Committee on 9th March 2021 – addressed to Matt Oliver, “Think Communities”.

Dear Matt,

As I stated at the East Barnwell Community Hub Stakeholder meeting on Thursday 7th October 2021, there were concerns about the tone and language used in this report which did not fully reflect the views of the local community.

By way of context, it is also worth highlighting that the Trustees of SeeSaw Pre-School were asked to meet with Jo German and Alan Fitz to explore the idea of SeeSaw staying at the Galfrid Road site as they were being asked to look at all options. At no point in that process were we told that this matter was being presented to a committee, and the tone of those conversations was very apologetic but it was a process they had to go through.

At the time of the discussion, we presented very clearly our views, gained from local knowledge, that co-location back at the newly developed hub was in the best interests of the local community – a point noted in Clause 2.14: *“Abbey ward is the most deprived ward in Cambridge City with the majority of the deprivation in the homes to the north of Newmarket Road where the East Barnwell Community Hub is located. Given the high levels of deprivation and corresponding low levels of aspiration, the proposed co-location of EY provision next to the library and community centre in the redeveloped hub is considered to be important for families living in the ward.”*

Our meeting as Trustees with Jo & Alan is not referred to at all in the report, nor is the strength of feeling conveyed. It was a surprise to us when we were then told of the committee meeting and eventually given a link to view this report, by which time we were not able to challenge it.

I find it interesting to note that the County Council is required to provide “*sufficient and suitable*” provision (Clause 2.1). It would be my contention that, from the view of being on the ground in Abbey, keeping SeeSaw Pre-School at its new location is definitely not suitable for the inhabitants of Abbey ward, and the County Council would, therefore be failing in its Statutory obligation.

In the opening introduction it would have been more accurate to report that SeeSaw has been operating “successfully” from its site at East Barnwell Community Centre (clause 1.2), and that we only agreed to move because we were assured that we would be moving back as part of the redevelopment (clause 1.3). If we had been told that there was a possibility that moving would have jeopardised the move back, I know that the Trustees would not have agreed without a firm written commitment from the County Council – we assumed they could be trusted!

In clause 2.13, the comment is made that: *"The mobile is in a good condition with an expected economic life of another 20 years."* As a Charity Trustee of the SeeSaw Pre-School, I have no basis to assess this statement – I have seen no report, we have not had any independent view to substantiate that view, and that means there is a risk to the future of the Charity without secure premises. What happens if the roof caves in in 5 years? Making statements such as this, in such a significant report as this, without giving the Trustees evidence to corroborate this judgement, is simple not right or acceptable.

In Clause 2.14, again it is not acceptable to put the figures for running costs in without having first spoken to the Trustees. In all the correspondence with the County Council regarding the current rent for the portacabin, we were repeatedly told that there is an option of applying for "less than best rent". To state that our suspected running costs are a barrier to us moving back is not the place of the County Council – that is a matter for the Trustees to decide. There was no discussion, we had no right to contest those figures – we have never been presented with a breakdown of how that figure has been arrived at. The County Council don't know the ongoing discussions of the Trustees about our running costs, our budgets, our income and expenditure – how dare they start quoting that as a reason for us to stay put! And ultimately, being in the most deprived ward in the City, Councillors could decide to offer us a "less than best rent", to support the disadvantage of the Abbey community – how can officers then use the increase in running costs as a reason to justify the decision to make us stay?

In Appendix 3, Advantages and Disadvantages are listed for the 3 locations. Comments pertaining to each option follows: -

Option 1

- The idea that it is easier for parents at The Galfrid to drop their children off sounds plausible. However, it is not based on fact – most of the children's older siblings attend Fen Ditton CP School or Teversham CoE Primary School. This fact is conveniently missing from this report completely – although it was made very clear when the Trustees met with Jo and Alan (and in the attached letter from the Chair – a point never mentioned in the committee meeting).
- There is talk of the County Council negotiating a sub-lease with the United Learning Trust. It states that there is a 5-year, short-term arrangement in place. The only evidence we have got that this is not a significant risk is the 'say so' of CCC in this report. We have not had sight of any details regarding this. From a Charity Trustee perspective this is a massive risk for us as we have no evidence that beyond the 5 years, we have any security that the Pre-School will be able to continue as we have no premises.
- Advantage 8 (also highlighted in clause 2.13) again doesn't do justice to the hard work that has gone in on the ground to maintain numbers, because we have been promising

parents we would be moving back. The hard work of Staff and Trustees to maintain numbers has now been used against us in this report and given as a reason to keep us where we have been relocated to.

Option 2

- As above, the use of the word ‘However’ is really loaded against us and, as just pointed out, has taken the hard work of Staff and Trustees and used it against the setting moving back to the newly developed site.
- All of the disadvantages listed are not, in my opinion, plausible to be listed as reasons not to relocate. I’ve tackled the issue of numbers previously, and the idea of helping parents from The Galfrid. I’ll come to the rent in a moment. The issue of re-registering with Ofsted is not a disadvantage at all – it is an inconvenience for sure, but we have been through this process once and it is something we knew we would have to go through again. To state this is a disadvantage is really clutching at straws and is an attempt to load the dice against us moving back.

Option 3

- You only need to talk to people on the ground at The Fields, The Galfrid and SeeSaw Pre-School to know without question that this is not even an option and should never have been included in this report as an option.

Conclusion

The two stand out points from this report are found in Clause 2.14 and 2.16.

In 2.14 it is clearly identified that co-locating the SeeSaw Pre-School has been understood all the way through as a really important way to tackling some of the issues found in the Abbey ward: *“Abbey ward is the most deprived ward in Cambridge City with the majority of the deprivation in the homes to the north of Newmarket Road where the East Barnwell Community Hub is located. Given the high levels of deprivation and corresponding low levels of aspiration, the proposed co-location of EY provision next to the library and community centre in the redeveloped hub is considered to be important for families living in the ward.”*

And yet in 2.16, it is made abundantly clear that this point has been completely forgotten and the only reason for the proposal coming forward is finance. *“Because of the financial implications of relocating the preschool EY provision back to East Barnwell Community Centre, officers recommend that the provision, currently provided by Seesaw Pre-school, remain in its current accommodation on the site of Galfrid Primary School.”*

Following a “Think Communities” model of listening to the local people, the residents of Abbey ward have been very clear throughout this process that forcing SeeSaw Preschool to stay at The Galfrid site is not in the best interests of the local community. To date we haven’t got a petition together to be able to garner the strength of feeling locally, mainly

because we didn't believe this issue should be politicised – this has to be about the community and not party politics.

Tackling many of the issues we are seeking to tackle, engendering and empowering the local community must surely be at the heart of decisions being taken by the Statutory authorities, but that is clearly not the case with this decision. There was no attempt by the committee to understand the needs of the local community. As I mentioned on numerous occasions at the Stakeholders meeting, Abbey is unlike any other community I have come across and certainly unlike any other in the City.

If the County Council is committed to a “Think Communities” approach, there is only one solution – to reverse the decision taken on 9th March 2021. The report states in 4.3 that there is a risk to the reputation of the County Council – I can assure you that this isn't a Risk – it is a certainty. We were led to believe that we could trust the Council to do the right thing for the community, we have sought to trust them at each step of the way, but that trust has been eroded, and as I stated again at the Stakeholders meeting, I have no confidence that the right thing will be done – I hope I am proved wrong.

Rev Stuart Wood

Minister Barnwell Baptist Church & Trustee of Abbey People CIO and SeeSaw Pre-School CIO

To:
Matt Oliver
Think Communities,
Cambridgeshire County Council

7 October 2021

Dear Matt,

Re: East Barnwell Community Centre Site Regeneration Plans

Further to our meeting today, I wanted to clarify that the opinion of the community continues to be that the East Barnwell Community Centre site regeneration should include at least a like-for-like replacement of the community facilities which currently exists, and that includes provision for Early Years (which has been provided on that site from the 90's through until recent history when SeeSaw Pre-School moved out due to impending regeneration).

Abbey People CIO is a community charity working in Abbey Ward of Cambridge since 2013, and has recently merged with the East Barnwell Community Centre activities of East Barnwell Community Association, which have been operating the centre since 1998.

I summarise below the key points relating to the inclusion of SeeSaw Pre-School on the East Barnwell Community Centre site.

For 8 years, the community has participated in multiple consultations, with ongoing partner meetings and date after date promised for work to begin, with all promises broken. The vision was to regenerate the community centre site, creating a hub for the community with additional services, and where families from Seesaw (some of the most deprived in the area) would have close access to services and support that they currently aren't accessing. The vision is dependent on more people accessing the site, and the inclusion of Seesaw contributes to the whole site being a success, as well as giving these children better opportunities of a good start in life.

The numerous community consultations about the site regeneration have been based on the assumption both that SeeSaw Pre-School will be part of the regeneration, and that multiple services will be co-located on the site, in order to allow for better reach of support services into hard-to-reach communities. The community expectation is based on what has been told to them in the past.

There is a wide range of needs within Abbey, and not all families look for the same things in deciding an EY provider for their children. Cost of places, as well as location are all part of that decision. It is important that this range of provision is supported, especially in a ward like Abbey where many children have not had an equal start in life. The right Early year provisions has been proven to have a transformative effect on children. This should be preserved at all costs!

Seesaw doesn't just serve the Galfrid school catchment, most of their children come from areas north of Newmarket road. It is important that there is an early years provision nearer to these families, especially as we know that the current location on the Galfrid site means many children are missing part or all of their sessions due to difficulties in getting to and from sites.



With some Early Years provision (following cuts to children's centres budgets) remaining at the Fields Site, and a regenerated community centre on Newmarket Road, families will have a nearby location that they can visit for support as needed. Without both sites, I am confident families will slip through the net and children will suffer.

From January 2019 – November 2020, our ward has seen a 327% increase in benefits claimants, a ward that was already the only ward in the city to become more deprived since 2015. The effects of the COVID pandemic aren't going away quickly. We are expecting a tsunami of need in this area, and the current providers are all part of the solution to breaking the cycle of poverty in this community.

Whilst the community understands the need to maximise budgets and reduce costs, there are huge social capital returns in investing in Early Years Education in a community such as Abbey, as well as the social capital returns associated with hard-to-reach families accessing support, training and employability services which they wouldn't access if these services weren't co-located.

We strongly urge the County Council to include SeeSaw Pre-School in the East Barnwell Community Centre regeneration plans.

Kind regards,

Nicky Shepard

CEO, Abbey People