

King Athelstan Primary School

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Headteacher: Emily Newton

25th November 2016

Re. Petition "Keep King Athelstan Land for King Athelstan kids"

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has recently come to our attention that an online petition has been set up regarding the sale of the property at the front of the school, commonly referred to as the caretaker's cottage.

The petition has attracted signatures from a variety of people – predominantly parents and local residents. We are very concerned that both the petition itself and many of the comments contain factual inaccuracies. This is particularly upsetting where there are any question marks around both the school's and the Council's commitment to securing the best infrastructure to support children's education and welfare whilst at King Athelstan.

It is important that both the school community and local community understand the situation in full. The school governors and Senior Leadership Team spent many hours over many months discussing (robustly) how best to achieve our common goal; namely to provide the best possible infrastructure for educating King Athelstan's children now that we are a (nearly full) two form entry school across all year groups. There is not a bottomless pit of cash available so budgetary considerations inevitably led to compromises. Ultimately, we are all accountable for how government money is spent – it needs to be done with great care and rigour.

Our compromise was an agreement to relinquish the caretaker's house, returning it back to council housing stock. It should be noted that the school never actually owned the house, albeit we were responsible for its upkeep whilst we made use of it. Bear in mind it is an old house and was very expensive to maintain. This arrangement superseded an earlier one to sell off a large part of the carpark for development of flats – you may have seen the planning application. After further consideration, the school took the decision that sufficient parking for its growing staff was a more important priority – both in terms of attracting new staff and retaining existing staff.

Whilst the house was occupied by our previous, permanent school premises manager up until August 2014, it has never been used by the children or provided any "educational" value. We have now recruited a fantastic premises manager who lives off site – this is more common than not with primary schools in the borough.

What have we got in return? All in all, these negotiations have helped to ensure that the school will, amongst other things, have:

- four new classrooms
- two new multi-purpose rooms for music, art, food technology, large group work etc.
- four additional, small group rooms
- a lift providing full disability access to the first floor
- new children's toilets
- a new staffroom
- new staff toilets and shower facilities
- new nursery toilets
- reworked and fully refurbished office/group spaces



Furthermore, the school will continue to feel like a single homogenous and "connected" building - not a rabbit warren of portacabins and tunnels. Be under no illusion, this is what the budget would have afforded without this agreement.

After our agreement, the house was subsequently auctioned and bought by private property developers. A number of planning applications have since been submitted for flats, but all have been rejected so far through the standard planning application process. The school will, obviously, itself oppose any proposals which we believe are to the detriment of the children's education. However, having made the decision to relinquish the property, we stand by that and believe we made the right compromise for the outcome we sought – one which is now coming to fruition.

It's a really exciting time for the King Athelstan community and we are keen for everyone to share in the enthusiasm we all have for the new building and the opportunities it will provide. Once this programme is completed, we will be embarking on another ambitious plan – to fully revamp our outdoor learning areas. We are all – children, staff, parents/carers and governors – already extremely proud of our school. All of these plans will only strengthen that!

If you still have concerns or have any more questions, please do get in touch.

Yours sincerely,



Ed Gossage

Chair of Governors



Emily Newton

Headteacher