

Matter 3, Issue 3/154

Written Submission – Constable House Site Allocation / Loss of Playground

I write further to my previous representations regarding the proposed allocation of land at Constable House, which is currently used as a children’s play area and an important area of open space for the local community.

The play area serves as a vital public space for local children, families, and residents, and its loss would have far-reaching consequences for wellbeing, safety, and community cohesion in an area where alternative provision is extremely limited.

I remain concerned that the proposed allocation of this site is not sound for the following reasons:

1. Loss of a valued and irreplaceable play space and public amenity

The site has been used for many years as an accessible playground for local children and families and represents the only readily available outdoor play space in the immediate area. Its removal would deprive residents of an essential community facility that supports outdoor recreation, social interaction, and child development. The Local Plan does not demonstrate how this loss would be mitigated or replaced in accordance with policies relating to open space and play provision.

2. Loss of green infrastructure and environmental value

In addition to its recreational function, the site contributes to local green infrastructure and environmental quality. The permanent loss of this green space would diminish the character of the area and reduce the quality of life for residents, contrary to Local Plan objectives that seek to protect and enhance open spaces and ecological assets within built-up areas.

The Council has planted trees on the site, and there are also several mature trees within and around the play area. These trees make an important contribution to local biodiversity, environmental quality, and urban cooling. Their loss or disturbance would be contrary to Local Plan policies that seek to protect existing trees and enhance green infrastructure.

3. Closure of the play area without consultation and resulting safety risks

The play area was locked and closed without meaningful consultation with local residents. Since its closure, children have been left with no safe nearby place to play and are now playing ball games, running, and playing hide-and-seek around parked vehicles and nearby streets. This creates clear safeguarding and highway safety concerns and significantly increases the risk of a serious accident.

4. Flood risk, ground conditions, and structural safety concerns

Local residents have experienced flooding in this area, and there are known concerns

regarding the water table and ground stability. I am also aware that, in the past, two flats in the vicinity of Constable House experienced structural issues, possibly linked to underlying ground conditions. The proposed allocation does not appear to be supported by robust evidence demonstrating that the site is suitable for development without unacceptable risk. Any future use of the site should be subject to thorough investigation of flood risk and ground stability to ensure the safety of future occupants and surrounding properties.

5. Access, parking, and pressure on local infrastructure

The surrounding streets already experience parking pressure, constrained access, and congestion, which has been further intensified by nearby development activity. Also relevant to the pressure on local infrastructure is the new development currently under construction around Chalk Farm Station. Unlike the previous building on this site, which was merely a garage, the new development will be occupied by residents, further increasing demand on local services, parking, and traffic. Any change of use or intensification of activity on the Constable House site would likely exacerbate these issues, with potential impacts on pedestrian safety, emergency access, and residential amenity. The Plan provides insufficient detail on how such impacts would be addressed or mitigated.

6. Lack of meaningful community engagement

Residents were not properly consulted before the play area was closed or the site was brought forward for allocation. The limited notification provided did not allow the community a fair or informed opportunity to engage with the decision-making process. The petition submitted, signed by a significant number of local residents, demonstrates the depth of concern and opposition within the community.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, I respectfully request that the Inspector considers whether the allocation of the Constable House playground site is justified, effective, and consistent with sound planning principles. At a minimum, the Local Plan should require the retention or full replacement of the play area and be supported by robust evidence addressing flood risk, ground stability, access, and infrastructure capacity before the site is taken forward.

Attachment: Copy of the petition previously submitted regarding the Constable House playground site, signed by local residents supporting the objection.

Yours faithfully,

Kind regards,

Mrs Z Mughal (Cindy)

BHRTA Chair