

From the newly formed Friends of St Matthew's Piece, May 2020 (issue 1)

A BRIEF HISTORY OF OUR PIECE

On 24 June 1898 the local press recorded the land of St Matthew's Piece being given to the local community for **Recreation and Leisure Purposes "forever"**.

In 1968 Prince Charles opened the HMC (**Howard Mallett Centre**) youth club on part of the Piece. In 1974, Cambridge City Council lost control of the HMC, when local government was reorganised, shifting education and youth services from City to County responsibility.

The HMC served generations of local youth until 1998. During the 1990s, the County starved the building of maintenance funds and ran down the youth services. Eventually the County leased the building and surrounding land to **Peter Dawe**. There was some involvement by Parkside Community College, but very poor relations with local residents. Dawe's venture collapsed after only half its 15-year lease had run.

Next (2006-2014) came **CityLife**, who planned a 'business enterprise unit'. This failed, following a remarkable judicial review by the Petersfield Area Community Trust (PACT) against Cambridge City Council. CityLife then subleased to the Chinese Community Centre. The site was used for a variety of purposes, some of which included a few local community members.

Chard Robinson bought the lease off CityLife in 2014 for £3.5M. Their initial promise was to move the local family-run Bodywork Dance Company into a custom-refitted building. Concealed from not only Bodywork but also from the community and planners, Chard Robinson did a 'bait-and-switch'. They leased the building to CSVPA (the lowest tier in a hierarchy owned by a big private equity company). An intense planning battle followed, involving hundreds from our community.

In 2018, **Federated Hermes** bought the lease for nearly £7M. They resurrected and *dosed with steroids* Chard Robinson's old Phase II designs for student accommodation on the site. Initially aired in August 2014 (but never submitted to planning), these new proposals are substantially bigger, more intrusive and far more radical than what had been universally loathed ... and that had gone nowhere throughout 2014–2017.

Federated Hermes may well be consulting now on something so *outrageous* with the intention of later dialling back a bit - perhaps to what everyone had opposed so strongly since 2014?

SO, HERE WE GO AGAIN...

This is the developer's website

www.stmatthewscentreproposals.co.uk

for their 'consultation' – before they submit a planning application. You can also read about their plans in the local *Cambridge Independent* of 6 May 2020 (look online).

Comments must be in **by 18 May 2020...**
We recommend that you respond **by email** to info@stmatthewscentreproposals.co.uk
Feel free to write **briefly, clearly & simply.**

Definitely DO:

- give your name and postal address;
- state that you want to be kept informed of any next steps;
- cc all our 3 Petersfield councillors:
kelley.green@cambridge.gov.uk
mike.davey@cambridge.gov.uk
richard.robertson@cambridge.gov.uk

Issues you might wish to mention could include possible impacts due to (or on):

- size of the building
- style of the building
- so many more students
- trees on St Matthew's Piece
- our park's feeling / mood
- the children's playground
- loss of trees on New Street
- our local conservation area
- intensity of use of the park
- our very limited local open space
- damage to Protected Open Space
- urgent local housing needs, etc.

Many people might wish to just **object** to the developer's proposals. That's fine!

Others may have ideas for what the developer could do instead that might be **better** (like: create fewer homes, but for local families). That's fine too.

Friends of St Matthew's Piece welcomes all local residents who wish to **protect our local park** from harm. Look for more news from us on the PACT noticeboards.

Contact us: Friends.of.st.matthews.piece@gmail.com