

I am a resident of Battledown and I grew up and went to school in Cheltenham. As a young person, I was interested in all sports including cross country. I ran regularly in races in the field we're discussing which is adjacent to St Edwards school as a young boy and I loved it.

My passion for sport and exercise drove my educational route and I gained a degree in Sports Science and coaching. I went on to receive multiple diplomas in coaching whilst continuing my passion for playing sport.

The pinnacle of my sporting career was representing England and GB 130 times including the Commonwealth Games and the Olympic Games in Beijing, where my athleticism and passion for sport played out on the world stage.

Since then, I've coached international teams and mentored players and coaches to pursue their sporting ambitions. I have dedicated my time to supporting young people in education and I now oversee and manage a diverse sports programme for over 1000 children as a Director of Sport. I also volunteer locally and work with charities to support young people to enjoy a sporting pathway.

My simple belief is to discover and develop the potential in each young person and instil a lifelong passion of sport and exercise.

My early education in Gloucestershire moulded my future, and I'm so grateful to have had the opportunity to enjoy wide open space in close proximity to my school.

It has been proven that being active improves mental health and one of the major determinations coming up post Covid is that young people are miserable at the moment. They're missing organised sport. They miss being outside in the fresh air, having fun with their friends and being active. The space we're discussing, has given so many people the opportunity to enjoy being active in the fresh air in a non-conventional setting.

Working in education in a senior leadership role, I see first-hand, every day, the significant impact that sites like this can provide in improving the education and mental health of young people.

Our kids are out there playing in the field regularly and the stuff they claim isn't there isn't true. We see the grass snakes, the badgers, the foxes, the toads, the newts, the flora and fauna, and, In a sporting context, we love to see the young people enjoying the opportunity to take part in cross country races and other expeditions just as I did as a young person.

It's a tragedy that we can't get anyone to acknowledge the value of the cross country site. It's imperative to get children into fields like this - a non-conventional space for activity.

The Gloucestershire wildlife trust has designated this field as a Local Wildlife Site, having been added to the Gloucestershire sites register in September 2020 by the site selection committee on the basis of 'value for learning.' In this regard the local wildlife site citation sets out that 'the site is exceptionally well-placed to offer educational opportunities either by its proximity to a school or other place of learning.'

Life experience is set at those formative years and the kids of the school and residents are waiting to see what is important to them so make the right decision.

This is a primary school and my children, and the children of others can enjoy everything that there is to offer.

We've seen the impact of kids not having been able to play sport for year. So why take this space away from them permanently.

There are so many contentious aspects which mean this site shouldn't be considered, but for me the educational and mental health benefits must be high on the agenda.

A natural England study has recognised that outdoor recreation has significant links to health, given its provision of physical activity, fresh air, socialising and moments of solitude which can all be seen to have an impact on people's health and wellbeing.

The report clearly outlines the natural marriage of outdoor recreation with health and wellbeing, something this site offers in abundance.

Make the right decision and preserve this designated wildlife site which has done so much to support the physical and mental health of so many people and will continue to long into the future.

Thank you