

SLRA draft response to Ashford Borough Council's consultation on Playing Pitch Strategy

Sandyhurst Lane Residents' Association (SLRA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Ashford Borough Playing Pitch Strategy 2017–2030 (PPS). The SLRA strongly supports the development of pitch facilities across the Borough, with particular reference to encouraging young people to participate in sporting activities.

Sandyacres Sports & Social Centre is located in Sandyhurst Lane, within the SLRA area, and is valued as a local sports resource with a number of existing sports pitches. The SLRA notes that, both in the PPS and in the draft Ashford Local Plan 2030, Sandyacres is identified as an important "community hub" for possible future development, "which could include improved sports pitches, informal and natural green space and potentially allotment space". In the PPS, Sandyacres is specifically identified as a priority site for improvement/reconfiguration for football pitches.

Whilst the SLRA welcomes this, we request that, in any proposals, due consideration is also given to their potential effects on the local environment, its character and its infrastructure, to ensure that they do not produce any unnecessary disruption or unintended consequences.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England published their final recommendations of the for the ward boundaries of Ashford Borough on 13 June 2017. These acknowledge the SLRA arguments that the whole of the Sandyhurst Lane and its surrounding roads should be considered as part of the rural hinterland of Ashford and, as such, have moved the ward boundaries to place the SLRA area, including Sandyacres, in the "rural" Downs West Ward and not, as originally proposed, in the newly created "urban" Goat Lees ward. This is an important consideration in the development of the Sandyacres facility.

In making these comments, the SLRA is mindful of some recent events at Sandyacres which have had unfortunate results for local residents.

For example, on 21 May 2017, a popular football tournament held at Sandyacres caused severe traffic disruption in both directions in Sandyhurst Lane due to an unexpected volume of traffic to the event, poorly organised parking and inadequate entry and exit arrangements. On another occasion, 19 April 2015, a poorly organised marathon based on Sandyacres resulted in inconsiderate parking across residents' driveways along Sandyhurst Lane and verbal abuse of residents by some participants.

Hopefully these are one-off examples, but they do illustrate the need to plan carefully any future development of Sandyacres to ensure that the necessary infrastructure arrangements are in place.

Similarly, the SLRA expects that any future development of the commercial aspects of Sandyacres, particularly entertainment or functions based, will require consideration of its relationship with local residents in terms of potential anti-social effects such as increased noise, light pollution, and late night traffic. Control and monitoring of litter is a further important consideration, both now and in the future. Any social functions should be located well away from neighbouring dwellings and be subject to the same hours restrictions as at present.