

Report to Polegate Town Council
on the
Brightling Road Leisure Ground Consultation
held at the United Reform Church Hall
15th July 2015

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Definitions

“BMX Trail” refers to the bike stunt trail which runs along the edge of the Site, to the East of the Meadow.

“Council” refers to Polegate Town Council

“Meadow” refers to the enclosed meadow area to the south of the playing fields. This area is bordered by PADMEC and the BMX trail

“Playing Fields” refers to the open playing fields within which there are a set of goals and a skate park.

“PADMEC” refers to the area in the South West of the playing fields, clearly fenced off with a miniature railway set up within the fencing.

“Site” refers to the Brightling Road Leisure Ground; being all the land owned by Polegate Town Council as defined by the plans held by the Council and registered at Land Registry that is accessed through the William Daly Gates.

“Accessway” refers to the strip of land immediately over the First Bridge granting access to the Site, that being a strip of land bordered to the North by the back gardens of those living on the southern side of Heron Ridge and to the South by the stream.

“First Bridge” refers to the concrete vehicle bridge on which are situated the William Daly Gates.

“Second Bridge” refers to the concrete vehicle bridge across the stream providing access to the Playing Fields.

“Football Club” refers to the Stone Cross Royals Football Club for under 11s

Overview

This report summarises the results of the informal consultation¹ held on the 15th July 2015. The consultation was organised to hear from local people regarding the proposals to improve the usage of the Brightling Road Leisure Ground and protect that land from development.

The proposals were as follows:

- 1) To place the site in to the Fields in Trust scheme;
- 2) To site allotments on the east of the Accessway, past the Second Bridge;
- 3) To turn some of the land from the First Bridge up to the Second Bridge into a gravel car park;
- 4) To allow the Football Club to mark up the field with 5 pitches;
- 5) To allow the Football Club to mark up a cricket crease;
- 6) To develop plans for more provision for younger children at the Site;
- 7) To grant a licence or lease to the Football Club to site a storage container on the Site;

Additional information regarding Fields in Trust was received on the day of the consultation that was relevant to the proposals.

To encourage public participation for the proposals and to respond to their concerns it was decided by the Council that a consultation should be held. Those residents living in close proximity to the site received a notice regarding the consultation.

At the meeting the public received a brief overview of the proposals. Mr Darren Bland gave a presentation on the Football Club and the public were then given an opportunity for comment and questions.

Mid way through the 2 hour meeting response forms were handed out to the public to provide quantifiable data for the Council to review.

¹ The consultation not conducted as a part of a statutory necessity, or formal council meeting.

Summary

There was overwhelming support for the proposals. There are small details to work out, but the core proposals – pitch markings, allowing the club to use the fields, a car park and container – all received very high support. The allotments were more cautiously received. As these are not as pressing more time should be taken in examining how this would work. Likewise the gravel car park requires a planning application and therefore the process will take some time. The container will also require further consultation and care as to placement and security.

It is therefore suggested the order in which the Council could progress is:

1. Fields in Trust (currently in hand)
2. Allowing the club to mark them up and to phase in use of the fields
3. Allowing usage of the Accessway as parking for PADMEC and the Football Club
4. Placement of a container, plus lease/licence
5. Planning application for the gravel car park
6. Examine the costs of current facilities, cost effectiveness and the financial sustainability² of placing facilities for younger children there.
7. Allotment decision in consultation with the waiting list and local residents
8. Planning the future of the grounds, enhancing facilities (in line with the concept of financial sustainability)

2 Financial Sustainability relies on two questions; Can it be afforded and can we afford to maintain it? These come after the question “Is it needed” is answered in the affirmative.

Data Collected

Below are the responses from the meeting via the response forms.

Form Number	Are you in favour of improving community and sporting facilities on the Brightling Leisure Ground?	Do You approve of the proposals to mark up the Brighting Road Leisure Ground with football pitches and a cricket crease?	Are you in favour of the plans to allocate allotments?	Are you in favour of plans proposing the parking provision, made to mitigate any parking impacts on local residents?	Are you in favour of the plans to place the whole area in Trust Scheme to protect the site from development?	Would you like to see more facilities for younger children on the site?	Do you approve of the under 11s football club using the grounds to provide sporting activities for young children?	Do you support the placement of a storage unit for use by authorised clubs on the grounds?
1	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
3	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
4	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
6	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
7	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
8	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
9	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
11	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
12	Y		N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
13	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
14	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
15	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
16	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
17	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
18	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
19	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
20	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
21	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
22	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
23	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
24	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	
25	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y
26	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
27	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
28	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
29	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y
Yes	29	28	25	26	29	28	28	28
No	0	0	3	2	0	1	1	0
Blank	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1
Yes	100.00%	96.55%	86.21%	89.66%	100.00%	96.55%	96.55%	96.55%
No	0.00%	0.00%	10.34%	6.90%	0.00%	3.45%	3.45%	0.00%
Blank	0.00%	3.45%	3.45%	3.45%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.45%

Comments

Below are the comments noted on the forms. To match up the data and the comments please refer to the Form Number on the first column. Numbers that appear in the comments column that are in bold indicate these comments were made against a particular question.

Form Number	Comments
	1 It would be great to have this used for Children and others
	5 There needs to be a dedicated and signed route to allow vehicle access to the site and could I ask if, when in operation as an operated car park, could it be manned by 2 members to ensure that these access arrangements are upheld. Also please could spaces be made available for the club of whose operate to support the community
	7 2 . Not the Cricket Crease
	8 5 . A play area
	10 5 . Fields in Trust is a must. 6 . Facilities throughout the town.
	11 Allotments doubtful unless you have a (sic) dioing suit
	15 But the rights of dog walkers must be protected
	21 Great to have a football club using the leisure ground, but additionally as a regular user of the model railway on a Sunday afternoons with my 4 young grandchildren how about having a swing park installed on the leisure ground? The one in Oakleaf drive isn't really suitable for the under 5's so with more young families living in Polegate this I think would be an ideal site.
	25 This is a very under used area of Polegate and if it opens up funding to provide for the community it is a good thing. I live in Manor Way and back any plans 100%. Anything that does time for youth is a good thing. My only suggestion would be a (sic) porta-loo.
	26 5 . And the meadow as a picnic area 8 . Subject to style and location Comments - Adequate off road parking and security of stream
	27 This will be good for Polegate and our children
	28 Born and bred in Polegate for 32 years and this is a great opportunity for the young of Polegate and all age ranges. Great for the town.

Breakdown of the responses by question posed

Question 1

Are you in favour of improving community and sporting facilities on the Brightling road Leisure Ground?

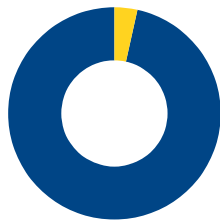
100% of all respondents agreed with this statement.

Comment

While this was a very nebulous question it goes to the root of what the council wish to do on the site. All respondents are in favour of improving the Site for community and sporting facilities.

Question 2

Do You approve of the proposals to mark up the Brightling Road Leisure Ground with football pitches and a cricket crease?



■ Yes
■ No
■ Blank

Responses: Yes 96.55% (28/29) No 0% (0/29) Blank 3.45% (1/29)

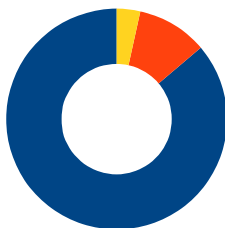
Comment

This is an overwhelming endorsement of the proposal to allow the Football Club to mark out the Playing Field. To help facilitate the implementation, if approved by the Council, the Town Clerk should be delegated the authority to agree with the Football Club the layout of the pitches, including a single cricket crease.

Response 12 left a question mark as a response, recorded as a blank. Response 7 commented that they did not approve of the marking out of a cricket crease. This take the response for the crease to 93.1% in favour, 3.45% against and 3.45% as no comment with regards to the cricket markings.

Question 3

Are you in favour of the plans to allocate allotments?



■ Yes
■ No
■ Blank

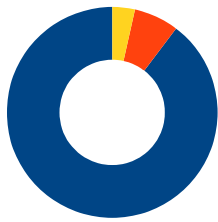
Responses: Yes 86.21% (25/29) No 10.34% (3/29) Blank 3.45% (1/29)

Comment

While there was overwhelming support for the allotments there were a few concerns regarding the position and impact of the proposals. As a long term proposals the ground could be earmarked for allotments pending a separate consultation with more detailed plans. Residents present at the meeting raised valid questions about the proposal that the Council should to consider further before creating and allowing cultivation of plots.

Question 4

Are you in favour of plans proposing the parking provision, made to mitigate any parking impacts on local residents?



- Yes
- No
- Blank

Responses: Yes 89.66% (26/29) No 6.9% (2/29) Blank 3.45% (1/29)

Comment

This response was an endorsement of the proposal to allow car parking on the Site. As a planning application would need to be made to create the proposed parking area, residents would be

invited to comment on the application.

While no comments were left on the response slips several questions were raised regarding the way the parking would operate. It was a hot topic, and it cannot be guaranteed that this proposal would reduce the total impact, it is clear it would absorb the majority of any increase in parking demand. Please see the section of this report dealing with the questions raised in the meeting for more on parking.

Without a car park it is likely any increased use of the Site would create parking disruption on neighbouring streets. This in turn would create safety issues and conflict. The creation of the parking area is a core component of the scheme.

Question 5

Are you in favour of the plans to place the whole area in the Fields in Trust Scheme to protect the site from development?

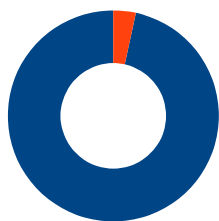
Responses: Yes 100% (29/29)

Comment

This proposal received a ringing endorsement. It is recommended that the Council press ahead as quickly as possible with this.

Question 6

Would you like to see more facilities for younger children on the site?



- Yes
- No
- Blank

Responses: Yes 96.55% (28/29) No 3.45% (1/29) Blank 0% (0/29)

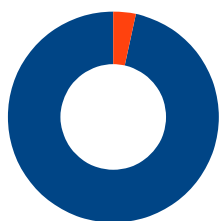
Comment

The responses support the creation of facilities for younger children on the site. Given the costs of such facilities it is suggested that the council look at the facilities, their costings, current and projected usage and costs of maintenance.

Given the ages of the potential users this is something that should be moved on swiftly.

Question 7

Do you approve of the under 11s football club using the grounds to provide sporting activities for young children?



- Yes
- No
- Blank

Responses: Yes 96.55% (28/29) No 3.45% (1/29) Blank 0% (0/29)

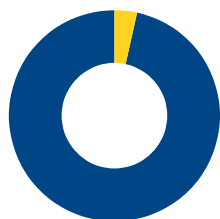
Comment

This proposal received overwhelming support from those at the consultation. From this response that the club can use the fields with the blessing of the residents. There are concerns from local

users about locking out residents from using the fields dealt with later in this report.

Question 8

Do you support the placement of a storage unit for use by authorised clubs on the grounds?



- Yes
- No
- Blank

Responses: Yes 96.55% (28/29) No 0% (0/29) Blank 3.45% (1/29)

Comment

Approval was given to this idea with no objections. There were questions raised about the siting, appearance and size of the container. These verbal questions are mentioned later in the report.

Summary

- There is strong support for all the proposals.
- Details of some proposals need to work out, and others put to consultation again.
- Overall the average of all responses was 94.8% Yes, 3.45% No and 1.7% Blank.
- The highest No count (3/29) was in against the allotments (see question 3). As the allotments are something the council can consider later it is suggested the Council return to this at another meeting.
- The proposals to mark out the pitches (question 2), allow the Football Club to use the fields (question 7) and to site a container (question 8) received no more than 1 negative response each. The Football Club could start phased usage of the site to provide an “easing in” period.
- Parking (question 4) had only 2 negative responses, but as a planning matter this will come before the public again. It is suggested that the Football Club and PADMEC be allowed to use the fields proposed to be parking as such on a temporary basis to assess the impact before the planning application is made.

Questions and comments

Record made of comments and queries made by the public at the meeting. This is not a complete record.

Locking out users

Issues regarding users of the field, dog walkers and other sport users for example, were concerned that they would be locked out from using the Site during the periods of Football Club use.

Analysis

Assuming the Site is used by normal users from 7am to 8pm (dog walkers may use it earlier). This leaves 13 hours on any given day of use. This multiplied by 7 days gives 91 hours of potential use per week.

The Football Club intend to use the Playing Field for 8 hours a week maximum.

This means the Playing Field is being used by the club for 8% of the available time over the course of a week. The Football Club are limited by the league fixture timings on weekends.

During the periods of use the fields are still open to the public, and can be used accordingly. Dog walkers, recreational users and others can use the Site, but it is acknowledged that playing football would be difficult if played on the same pitch as the Football Club. What is required from all users is consideration for each other. Dog walkers have access to the BMX trail and Meadow to let their dogs off their leads, but it is incumbent on all dog owners that they have control over their animals at all times on public land. If there is a conflict between those wishing to use the pitches or space for sports, it is hoped the parties could reach an amicable compromise between themselves as is the case on other public spaces.

The Football Club has stated that it is unlikely all pitches will be in use any given time. Training time does not mean that the pitches will be in use. It means there will be pitches vacant.

Drainage and field quality

That the Playing Fields would suffer as a result of usage combined with the poor drainage.

Analysis

The Football Club is not proposing to use the fields if they are in a poor condition. During the worst conditions the Football Club uses artificial pitches elsewhere. Drainage of the Playing Field is a long term objective of the Council. The drainage of the Playing Fields does not affect the proposed usage by the Football Club at this time.

Parking and traffic

This was a common concern. The effect of the proposal would be to increase both traffic and parking requirements. It was proposed in that part of the Accessway be used to park cars on to address the concerns. This was strongly supported in the response slips returned.

Legitimate questions over safety were raised. Planning permission would be sought for the gravel car park, and questions of low fencing, access points, turning circles and gate monitoring would be addressed at this stage. These are finer detail that stem from any car park placed on the Accessway, and can be addressed during or post planning approval. It was acknowledged that without parking the proposals would add many tens of cars to the surrounding streets.

Analysis

Without creating a parking area the proposals would have an adverse impact on parking for residents. It would be advisable to allow ad hoc parking on the site while the Football Club is using the Playing Fields while a planning application is made. Considerations as to the saturation of the proposed parking area would have to be part of the discussions between the Football Club and Council.

Funding

There were concerns raised that funding would be diverted to support this proposal rather than other more urgent matters that the Council should address.

Analysis

Much of the work to be undertaken initially is either free to the Council or of negligible cost. The Football Club will mark out the ground and purchase their own container. Negligible costs would include moving the existing goals to somewhere more compatible with the pitch layout. The future costs to the council would be plumbing in the allotments and creating the car park. These have not yet been quantified. Other costs such as installing a children's' playground are not within the scope of this report.

Toilets

Queries were raised about the lack of toilets on the site for the Football Club users.

Analysis

The Football Club response was that none of their previous facilities had toilets. None have been needed as yet. The situation should be monitored. If the Football Club would like to make use of the Playing Fields long term some solution to this needs to be found. It would be that the club be asked to provide a temporary toilet at some events such as large match meetings.

Storage facility

There were concerns about the siting of a storage container on the site for use by the club. Questions on security, monitoring, appearance and location of the container were all raised.

Analysis

The container is a necessary part of the proposal to allow the Football Club to use the site. It allows the club to store the goals and other equipment it requires. It is suggested that the Council allow the Football Club to site a container with the formulation of placement options to be delegated to the Town Clerk. These should then be placed before the Council at a future meeting, due notice being given to residents by way of publication of agenda. The container will therefore not be in place before September pending that decision.

General approval

It should be noted that the proposals in general received support from those present. Rounds of applause from the assembled public followed those who spoke out in favour of the proposals to provide opportunities for youth activities in the area.

Analysis

There was strong support for the proposals. This is demonstrated by the responses received.

Assumptions

- Park is used by normal users from 7am to 8pm (dog walkers may use it earlier).
- This leaves 13 hours any given day of use, times 7 means 91 hours of potential use per week.
- The Football Club intend to use the Playing Field for 8 hours a week *maximum*, and then only for 2 months at this level of usage.

Club Training schedule

March to September

Training Wed & Thurs - **5:30 to 6:30pm**

Training Saturdays - **9am – 11am**

It must be remembered that the age groups share pitches to train on, therefore pitches should again be free,

Sundays - 10am Kick Offs Finish no later than 2pm but most pitches will be finished by 12pm

Games will be played end of August through to end of October

Possible infrequent games in November and April depending on grounds.

Artificial facilities used in winter.

Therefore from March to August the Football Club will use the Playing Fields for 4 hours a week. ((4 hours a week multiplied by 4.33 weeks per month) multiplied by 5 months)= 86 hours of use Divided by 1970 hours of potential use then the overall usage by the Football Club is **4.4%** of available time.

From August to September the Football Club will also have matches, taking the usage up to a maximum of 8 hours per week. ((8 hours a week multiplied by 4.33 weeks per month) multiplied by 2 months)= 69 hours of use Divided by 788 hours of potential use then the overall usage by the Football Club is **8.7%** of available time.

From September to October the Football club then play matches only, therefore the field will only be in use for a maximum of 4 hours a week on a Sunday. ((4 hours a week multiplied by 4.33 weeks per month) multiplied by 1 month)= 17 hours of use Divided by 394 hours of potential use then the overall usage by the Football Club is **4.4%** of available time.

	Training	Matches
Jan	No weekday usage	No Sunday usage
Feb	No weekday usage	No Sunday usage
Mar	4 hours per week	No Sunday usage
Apr	4 hours per week	Possible usage
May	4 hours per week	No Sunday usage
Jun	4 hours per week	No Sunday usage
Jul	4 hours per week	No Sunday usage
Aug	4 hours per week	4 hours Sunday
Sep	4 hours per week	4 hours Sunday
Oct	No weekday usage	4 hours Sunday
Nov	No weekday usage	Possible usage
Dec	No weekday usage	No Sunday usage

	Mar – Jul	Aug -Sept	Oct
Hours of training	4	8	4
Hours x 4.33 weeks p/m	17.32	34.64	17.32
Months	5	2	1
Total time used	86.6	69.28	17.32
Total time available	1970.15	788.06	394.03
Percentage	4.40%	8.79%	4.40%

Acknowledgements

The Author wishes to thank the following, in no particular order:

The public who attended the consultation. Thank you for your support and probing questions. It is always good to have the ideas tested and new questions asked as well as the voices of support. The wide range of expertise and experience present was very helpful.

The councillors and Town Clerk who attended. To the councillors for support and enthusiasm has made this opportunity possible and the Town Clerk for arranging the meeting.

The Stone Cross Royals Football Club who helped to hand out the consultation leaflets. Darren Bland for allowing himself to experience local politics by means of giving the presentation.

The Sussex Police for being present via their PCSO.

The Council looks forward to creating more of these opportunities for the public to be consulted on matters that affect Polegate.