

ST HELENS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

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Sue Harris

Bi-Borough Executive Director for Environment, Leisure and Residents Services

Council Offices 37 Pembroke Road

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June 14th 2016

Dear Ms Harris

Kensington Memorial Park Improvements

I am writing to you on the above following a discussion on the above at the association's open meeting on June 9th. St Helens Residents Association has the same membership as the St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum. Memorial Park lies within the neighbourhood area, designated by RBKC in 2013, and the StQW Neighbourhood Plan was successful at a local referendum in February 2016.

We have over 400 members, 60 of whom attended the meeting on the 9th including Cllrs Pat Healey, Robert Thompson and Mo Bakhtiar.

The survey seeking views on improvements to Memorial Park has prompted much local debate. Firstly there are concerns as to who was notified of the survey, as roughly half of those at our meeting had heard of it only by word of mouth rather than having received the leaflet delivered to some households. Cllr Healy agreed to pursue this question.

Residents of the new development at Argyll Place, which looks onto the current football pitch, tell me that they did not receive leaflets. Nor was any communication sent to either St Helens RA or the StQW Neighbourhood Forum. Searching the RBKC website under 'Kensington Memorial Park' brings up details of the park and its Management Plan, but no mention of the survey. I have now circulated the link to the survey to all our members, but the extent of coverage of residents in the area must still be in doubt.

Placing one or more notices in the park, giving details of the link to the survey, would seem a sensible measure?

While the survey includes a lengthy list of questions and is presented as 'options' for improvement, it has come across to many residents as a weighted consultation exercise in which the installation of a floodlit artificial turf pitch has been chosen as the Council's preferred way forward.

Our meeting discussed the background to the S106 Agreement negotiated between the original developer of Argyll Place (Clarendon Group) and RBKC. Many local residents are familiar with this background, as the development was contentious at the time.

Our clear understanding is that the S106 Agreement included a financial contribution of £150,000 towards 'improvements' to Memorial Park. Specific improvements were defined, with the first of these being '*the refurbishment of the grass sports pitch*'. There is no reference in the agreement to artificial pitches or floodlighting.

A vote taken at our meeting was unanimous that refurbishment of the existing grass sports pitch is what the Park needs, and the project to which a major part of the S106 receipt should be allocated. We understand that there is a drainage system in good working order beneath the existing pitch but that the earth above has become very compacted and needs levelling and relaying to markedly reduce problems of the grass becoming waterlogged in winter months.

There was an unanimous view that an artificial pitch, which would take away an existing grassed area well used along with the rest of the park for sitting around, picnics and informal play, would be a retrograde step rather than an 'improvement'. Memorial Park has always been a local park, valued for its green space. The nearby Westway Sports Centre provides all-weather football pitches for a wider catchment area as well as local players.

At present, the youth teams of Kensington Dragons football club use the grass pitch regularly at weekends and this arrangement works well, leaving the grass area as part of the park at other times.

Installation of an artificial pitch, with floodlighting (and presumably fencing) would not only change the nature of the park but would be strenuously opposed on planning and other grounds by residents in the adjacent Pangbourne Avenue, Princess Louise Walk, Oakworth Road and the surrounding streets.

On the basis of the unanimous view at the SHRA/StQW meeting (a hand vote was taken) the Association and StQW Forum would be making objections to planning applications for such a use.

As you may be aware, the 2011 Localism Act and Neighbourhood planning regulations provide that where a neighbourhood plan is in place, 25% of CIL proceeds within the designated area go direct to a parish council which has prepared the plan. In the case of a neighbourhood forum, the planning authority is required to consult and agree with the forum on the allocation of 25% of CIL receipts.

While the S106 contribution from Argyll Place predates this legislation, the StQW Forum would welcome the Council's recognition that the views of local residents should play a large part in how these resources are allocated.

I trust that the contents of this letter will be taken into consideration alongside individual responses to the online survey. I am copying it to Cllr Ahern, and to councillors in St Helens and Dalgarno wards.

Yours sincerely

Henry Peterson
Chair St Helens Residents Association and StQW Neighbourhood Forum
www.sthelensresidents.org.uk, www.stqw.org

cc Cllr Tim Ahern, Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure
Cllr Pat Healy, Cllr Mo Bakhtiar, Cllr Robert Thompson, Cllr Eve Allison