

PROPOSITION TO SECURE THE FUTURE OF DULWICH SPORTS GROUND

As you may know, we held an open meeting last week and we plan to hold another meeting on Wednesday 17th July at 7pm. We have heard some concerns about our recent planning application to utilise a redundant modular classroom building as both a Nursery and as classroom and teaching space connected to sport. We would like to address some of the issues raised but also endeavour to put this project in a wider context. Our planning proposal allows a choice between:-

- a small discreet building (160 m²) on a unused part of the 85,000 m² that is the ground, to be operated by local people, serving local children and with a degree of optimism that the playing fields, for the use by all stakeholders, will be sustainable in the longer term or
- a very uncertain future for the playing fields in both the short and longer term.

The foregoing provides a more detailed of the rationale applied.

The Southwark Community Sports Trust (SCST) was created to save the playing fields on Turney Road when London Southbank University closed the playing fields and facilities in September 2010. Much uncertainty surrounded the future of the grounds with the real possibility that they would lie fallow and inaccessible for a period of 7 years until the expiry of the lease in Dec 2017.

The Trust is constituted as a Community Interest Company which means it is a not for profit organisation and should the company be dissolved, any residual assets will be transferred to another CIC as determined by the CIC Commissioner. None of the directors receive any form of remuneration and it is estimated that over 3,000 man hours are donated as a "social cost" in running the facilities on an annual basis by the volunteers who are the Directors of the Company. The objectives of the Trust are quite simply:-

- To promote participation in football, rugby and cricket for local male & female sports clubs, schools and youth associations
- To provide and maintain high quality playing surfaces and facilities for use by members and the wider community.
- To manage the financial arrangements of the Company in such as way as to enable the Company to enter into a new lease with The Dulwich Estate (the landlord) at the expiry of the current lease in 2017.



Southwark Community Sports Trust

This project is simply about trying to find a way of allowing the grounds to continue in their current form and to remove the uncertainty and concern that was experienced in 2010.

The Trust has a variety of stakeholders - the residents in the area, the Dulwich Estate, Southwark Council, a number of schools in the area, our member clubs and by association the ECB, the FA and the RFU. We are proud to say that over 7,000 people play sport each year with over 25,000 usages.

When The Trust took over the facilities, there was some idea as to operating costs partly from information provided by LSBU (which proved to be at best misleading) and, partly from the Directors knowledge of running other sports facilities. The most significant factor in deciding to proceed was that LSBU committed to underwrite the rent to the Estate which was £37,500 in 2010 and, subject to a rent review, has risen to £38,500 until 2017. This notional rent increase is in itself indicative of the fact that there is very little market for the management of green spaces. There was confidence however that the facilities could be operated at least until 2017.

It has always been assumed that there would be no rent reduction proffered by the Dulwich Estate. We have always stated that in order not to act irresponsibly or take on something that was not sustainable that we needed between 2 & 3 years rent reserves by 2017. The recent very wet winters (and summers) have led to a significant loss of income for the Trust, which led to the Board's conclusion that stable and sustainable income streams needed to be created.

The current project arose entirely opportunistically with the offer to donate a modular building by Lyndhurst Primary School in exchange for use of the grounds by the schools pupils for PE and the creation of an outdoor learning centre. We submitted a planning proposal to Southwark on 31st May and briefed the Turney Road Resident's Association at the same time.

We have discussed a licence for the nursery with the Dulwich Estate in the context of the remainder of the lease and also to secure a long extension of the lease.

Unless there are other ideas about how the playing fields can be sustained if this scheme does not go ahead, the Trust will be unable to extend the lease and will be forced to walk away. What becomes of the sports ground is then open to uncertainty. People talked about Beckenham's former playing fields where there has been far more significant commercial development. We think that this project offers a robust way forward.

During the planning process, many issues have been raised. Some residents have asked about:

- Metropolitan Open land – this project allows the continuance of green space and as dual use, qualifies for consideration by the Council under delegated powers.
- Increased traffic – the nursery is limited to 41 places, there are 11 Turney Road residents on the waiting list and the hours (unlike schools) are staggered. This also ignores the fact that between

9am & noon on Saturdays and Sundays between 150 & 300 cars drive in and out of the ground. There will be no diminution of off street parking in Turney Road as the ground has over 50 parking spaces. A significant number of residents on Turney Road have converted their front gardens into parking spaces which implies reversing onto Turney Road – an inherently more dangerous proposition than turning left or right into the sports ground.

- Drainage – the Trust has made some investment in drainage around the willow tree whilst Southwark is acting on longer term about flash flooding in Dulwich. The flow of the former River Effra was on the other side of the SCST Pavilion.