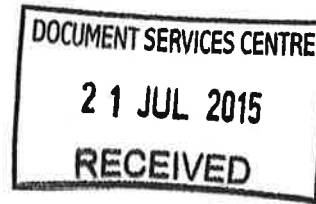


Response from Rowley Fields and Rowley Fields Forever Groups

Sarah Summers,
Clerk to Stratford Town Council ,
Sheep Street,
Stratford upon Avon.



Copy to:

Freepost RTJX-GHEE-ZUCS, Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Consultation Unit,
Elizabeth House, Church Street, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 6BR.

July 2015

Stratford upon Avon Neighbourhood Plan

Dear Ms Summers,

On behalf of the Friends of Rowley Fields and Rowley Fields Forever, we wish to submit the following representation within the Pre-submission Consultation period of the draft Neighbourhood Plan. Both our groups have formed following the Town Trust's proposals to sell two parts of Rowley Fields (green field), for development and the building of houses.

Councillors will be familiar with the history of Rowley Fields, which forms part of the College Estate and is managed by the Town Trust, land that has been used by residents of Stratford for decades for recreation and leisure time pursuits. In late 2014, the Town Trust listed two parts of Rowley Fields for development in the District Council's 'Call for sites' document, 7.8 acres at the top of Maidenhead Road and a smaller parcel at the rear of Avenue Road called the Benson Road parcel. There was huge opposition which culminated in the Town Trust releasing the following statement on 24th February 2015:

"Stratford Town Trust is announcing it has listened to the voice of the community and will not pursue the opportunity to develop 7.8 acres of Rowley Fields for housing.

Instead, the Trust wants to work with the townspeople to set up a Friends of Rowley Fields, to help with the maintenance of the land and to look at ways of further utilising it for recreational purposes and income generation for the future".

The Trust also announced at that time that it was still proposing to sell and build on the smaller Benson Road parcel.

The whole of Rowley Fields including both the 7.8 acres and the smaller Benson Road parcel are included in the draft Neighbourhood Plan as warranting local green space designation (page 102, Policy CLW 4, and Figure 11 page 104).

On 1st July 2015, at the Trust's Annual General Meeting, members heard that the Town Trust planned to object to designation of all the greenfield land at Rowley Fields as Local

Green Space, as proposed in the Neighbourhood Plan. Not only is this contrary to their statement of the 24th February but conflicts with the Trusts objects and strategic priorities, in particular object 4:

“to provide or support (with the object of improving the conditions of life for beneficiaries in the interests of social welfare) facilities for recreation and other leisure-time occupation”.

The Trust has subsequently released a press release to say that it will not be objecting to the designation of the 7,8 acres as Local Green Space, but will be proceeding with (and therefore will be presumably objecting to) the development of the Benson Road parcel of Rowley Fields.

Clearly, our two groups strongly support the proposal contained in the Neighbourhood Plan to designate all of Rowley Fields (green field) as Local Green Space. See page 102 – reference CLW4.

We would like to offer the following summary of evidence which demonstrates how the land meets the criteria for designation contained within the National Planning Framework. As this stage we have only summarised the evidence but we can provide more detail if this would be of assistance to Councillors.

‘Reasonably close proximity to the community it serves’

Rowley Fields is a well-used public amenity. Rowley Fields is used for walking, cycling, running even kite flying and model aircraft, local running clubs, schools, scouts and guides all use the land. The land is used daily by a large number of residents from the Welcombe Ward, children from the local school use the land. The land is not isolated from the community with seven access points; including one with a ‘radar’ disabled access lock.

Additionally, people travel from across the town to use the land; this is evidenced by the large numbers of cars frequently parked at the top of Maidenhead Road (photographic evidence is available).

‘Demonstrably special to a local community’

As Stratford has grown, the need for recreational land has increased. Rowley Fields is a great natural space. It’s a safe place where young and old meet, exercise, play or simply have contact with friends and acquaintances. For some people it is the only opportunity for meeting others.

The strength and volume of opposition collected by a small group of volunteers alone demonstrates the strength of opposition.

‘Beauty’

The area is a local beauty spot, the current layout of trees, hedgerows and open land provides views across town towards Meon Hill and Sunrising Hill. Over a number of years both the Trust and Town Council have provided benches for users to sit and enjoy the open

space and views. Many years ago a block paved footpath was added to help prevent erosion of the land and during winter months additional measures have been employed in areas of high traffic to avoid erosion. There are numerous walkways across the fields and these can best be appreciated from aerial photography which can be supplied. We also have a large selection of photographs dating back several years which provide evidence of the range of people and groups using the land, including larger events e.g. the local athletic club cross country races.

As has already been stated the land is well used by the local special school on a very regular basis. We are able to provide video evidence of groups using Rowley Fields and short interviews of users, school representatives and wildlife experts.

‘Historic Significance’

The land has particular historic significance; it borders a grade 2 listed building, International Modern with visual links to the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. Rowley Fields provides unrestricted views across the Welcombe Hills towards ‘The Obelisk’ a historic monument erected in 1876 by Robert Philips and is overlooked by Clopton House Tower a belvedere and listed building built in circa 1850.

‘Recreational Value’

The recreational and leisure value of Rowley Fields is potentially its most significant asset. In Stratford there are very few open spaces available for residents to use, where they can run, walk or cycle unimpeded. Again, we can provide video and still photography to demonstrate this fact. The Greenfield land is particularly well used by people with mobility issues as it is flat with well-defined walkways and benches. The Town Trust maintains these areas and also provides a large number of ‘dog waste’ collection points.

‘Tranquillity’

Rowley Fields does offer an oasis of calm and quite often residents can be seen taking time on one of the many benches to enjoy the natural environment. Several benches have been dedicated in memory to loved ones with small plaques of remembrance. Unlike other open spaces in Town e.g. the Recreation Ground, Rowley Fields provides a quieter location away from tourists, cars and vendors. The views from the top of the hill back towards Stratford are currently unobstructed over Rowley Fields.

‘Richness in wildlife’

In addition to more common birds, Buzzards, Kestrels, Barn Owls, Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers are present. In autumn the fields host migrating flocks of Redwings and Fieldfares. Foxes, moths’ butterflies and bats are regular visitors. Friends of Rowley Fields have arranged a number of nature walks, some specifically for children, together with an evening bat walk, during 2015. Rowley Fields provides a buffer between residential properties and the Local Nature Reserve – there is an abundance of wildlife. Some years

ago local Scout groups worked with The Town Trust to plant tree saplings in the fields which are now beginning to flourish. Working with The Trust and a local school the Friends of Rowley Fields have secured sponsorship to plant more trees on the land. Long term it is hoped to develop a Forest School and in 2016 to create a grass maze for local children to use.

Socio-economic research

We have attached a report outlining research conducted by the University of Glasgow which demonstrates the significant value, well-being and equality provided by access to green space.

Evidence

We can supply the following evidence, which supports the varied use and value of Rowley fields as an amenity space, protected by Local Green Space designation:

- Over 240 signed user statements from residents of the immediate neighbourhood. Responses evidence use of Rowley Fields dating back decades, young, old, fit and disabled.
- 215 Gate surveys conducted over a damp weekend in February 2015 which highlight the following:

Total Number of people questioned:	215
Number of Males:	97
Number of Females:	118
> 18 Users:	16
19 - 60 Users:	128
61 + Users:	71
Daily Users:	87
Once a Week Users:	29
More than Once a Week Users:	66
More than Once a Month Users:	34
For the Development:	2
Against the Development:	209
Undecided:	4

- A signed petition from local residents containing 30 signatures of opposition to building plans.
- A Facebook group with 1048 members.

The Friends of Rowley Fields was formed in late June 2015 and currently has almost 70 members. More information on the association can be viewed at www.friendsofrowleyfields.co.uk. The Rowley Fields Forever Action Group was formed in 2013 and more information can be found on www.rowleyfieldsforever.wordpress.com

The Town Trust recognises the use of the land having recently introduced a booking process for users to complete prior to hiring the fields (see copy attached).

In conclusion, we recognise that the Neighbourhood Plan is an important document which is the culmination of significant effort and work by the Steering Group, covering much more than Rowley Fields or Local Green Space designation. Many people in our groups welcome the plan which will finally provide a basis for council, landowner and developers to follow in the coming years. We wish to place on record our thanks to those people who have worked so hard preparing and producing the document.

We recognise the need for more homes and buildings in Stratford, which are sustainable and affordable, however, as our Town continues to grow recreational and leisure space must be protected and enhanced for future generations. Local green space helps keep people healthy, it provides safe venues for young and old to exercise, wildlife thrives and our environment is enhanced. Priorities often overlooked by our rapacious developers. We urge you to endorse the Neighbourhood Plan and the designation of all of Rowley Fields as Local Green Space.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Bailey

Chair – Friends of Rowley Fields

www.friendsofrowleyfields.co.uk



Alison Rigg

Rowley Fields Forever

www.rowleyfieldsforever.wordpress.com

16.7.2015

- [Archive of news](#)
- [Information for the media](#)
- [University events](#)

Access to green space reduces rich-poor divide in mental wellbeing

Related links

- [Professor Richard Mitchell: researcher profile](#)
- [Link to paper published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine](#)
- [Centre for Research on Environment, Society and Health](#)
- [CRESH Twitter feed @CRESHnews](#)

Issued: Mon, 20 Apr 2015 05:00:00 BST

Having access to green spaces significantly reduces the gap in wellbeing between richer and poorer people a European study has found.

Socioeconomic inequality in mental wellbeing was 40% narrower among people reporting good access to green / recreational areas compared to those with poor access.

The research team say that green space is 'equigenic' because it appears that it may help in creating health equality between richer and poorer people.

The research showed that access to green / recreational space was the only neighbourhood characteristic tested which had this link to narrower inequalities in wellbeing, The study concludes that green space could have an important part to play in reducing socioeconomic health inequalities.

The study is published today in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* and was carried out by the Centre for Research on Environment, Society and Health (CRESH), which is shared by the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Researchers looked at data on 21,294 urban residents from 34 nations recorded in the 2012 European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS). They then measured mental wellbeing using the WHO-5

wellbeing index – which asks respondents five questions on how they have been feeling in the preceding two weeks.

The measure of socioeconomic position distinguished between those who reported that they were able to make ends meet at the end of the month very easily or easily, fairly easily, or with some difficulty, and with difficulty or great difficulty.

Respondents also reported on how easy it was for them to access to five different neighbourhood facilities or services: recreational/green spaces, postal services, banking services, public transport and cultural services (like cinema, theatre or a cultural centre).

Adjustments were made to account for respondents' age, sex, illnesses limiting daily activities, education level and employment; as well as adjusting for reported neighbourhood problems such as noise, air quality, crime, violence, vandalism, litter and traffic congestion.

Socioeconomic inequality in mental wellbeing was 40% narrower among respondents reporting good access to green space, compared with those with poorer access. None of the other neighbourhood characteristics or services were associated with narrower inequality.

Study leader Professor Rich Mitchell of the University of Glasgow, said: "Our research supports the idea that environments could play a part in reducing inequalities in health, either in tandem with other social policies, or independently."

Previous studies have shown that greenspace has physiological and psychological benefits for an individual's health.

However, these studies did not compare green space with other features of the environment. This study was the first to compare different neighbourhood characteristics or services to see which were associated with narrower socioeconomic health inequalities.

Professor Jamie Pearce of the University of Edinburgh said: "Many experiments have identified that contact with nature can be a balm to those who are stressed or fatigued. It seems that the beneficial effects of using green areas are stronger for those under greater levels of financial stress"

"While this kind of study could not prove greenspace was the cause of the reduced inequality there are two reasons why the effect is plausible: the narrowing of inequality did not occur among

those not using their green space; and experimental studies have proven that contact with nature can cause improved mental wellbeing.

Prof Mitchell added “We believe that some environments can reduce health inequalities. We call these ‘equigenic’ environments, because they seem to create equality. If societies cannot, or will not, narrow the financial gap between richer and poorer people, research should explore whether these environments can help stop that wealth gap becoming a health gap”.

Media enquiries: stuart.forsyth@glasgow.ac.uk / 0141 330 4831

APPLICATION FOR HIRE OF ROWLEY FIELDS



Please complete this form with as much detail as possible and return to:

Stratford-upon-Avon Town Trust
 14/15 Rother Street
 Stratford-upon-Avon
 CV37 6LU

Tel: 01789 207111 Fax: 01789 207119
 email: sandra.perkins@stratfordtowntrust.co.uk

DETAILS OF HIRER

Name of Organiser / Contact: Mr / Mrs / Miss

Name of Club / Organisation

Address

.....

Telephone: Home..... Business.....

Email

DATE/S REQUIRED

Please indicate time access is required:

DAY	DATE	MONTH	YEAR	TIMES	
				FROM	TO

EVENT DETAILS

It is important that this section is completed in full even if some of the questions are not applicable , please indicate this . The Town Trusts insurers request this information .

EVENT DETAILS

Type of Event (e.g. sporting event, concert, fete, family party etc.....

Purpose of the event.....
.....

Number of event party and estimated audience/visitors.....
.....

Is there an entrance fee.....

Have all the necessary licences, permits and permissions been obtained from all relevant authorities and emergency services (e.g. local authority, police and fire brigade)
.....
.....

Will the police be in attendance.....

Have you carried out and implemented a written risk assessment in respect of this event
.....

How many stewards will be employed to control visitors
.....

Will alcohol be sold.....

Will visitors be allowed to bring their own alcohol.....

Will first aid facilities be provided.....

Will you be using a security company.....

Will there be any structures erected.....

Please provide full details.....
.....

Hire Fee

The hire fee for Rowley Fields is TBA

Please enclose a cheque with your application which shall be payable to **“Stratford upon Avon Town Trust”**.

INSURANCE - As a condition of the hire of the area of Rowley Fields you are required to hold Public Liability Insurance which should provide a minimum of £2,000,000 (£2 million) cover. Please attach a first generation copy when returning this application form.

I HAVE READ AND ACCEPT THE TOWN TRUST’S “TERMS OF LETTING” AND HEREBY APPLY TO HIRE ROWLEY FIELDS AS ABOVE.

SignedDate

For many of the smaller events the response will be N/A but this will be good for larger events.

on behalf of(Name of organisation)

