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consultations@canterbury.gov.uk

Wednesday 8th October 2025

Email: [REDACTED]

Draft Canterbury District Local Plan: Focused consultation 2025

RE: Save Thanington Rec!

Dear Planning Team,

We are writing to register our strong objection to the proposed relocation of the Wincheap Park & Ride to Thanington Recreation Ground. As local residents and regular users of the green space, we have serious concerns about the recent proposal.

- We are concerned about the loss of the only green space as a community asset in Thanington, and the impact on families and residents.
- We are concerned about the impact on Thanington Resource Centre as a charity and community asset.
- We are concerned about the combined impact to people's wellbeing and health by having reduced green space and reduced use of Thanington Resource Centre.

Loss of Thanington Rec as a community asset

Thanington Rec is the only safe, open area for children to play, families to meet and dogwalkers to use in Thanington. It is a massively valuable community asset. There is a children's play area in Saxon Fields, but this does not offer space to dogwalkers or benches for families to meet. The Rec also has the skatepark, and ballcourt, which is floodlit until 11pm 365 days per year, which is fantastic for teenagers.

The loss to people's mental wellbeing and physical wellbeing by losing the ability to walk here is really significant. During covid, when people had to stay at home and were really limited, Thanington Rec was a lifesaver space for some people without gardens. Clearly, if another pandemic were to happen it would be a tragedy if there was no green space here, just a car park. More broadly, we are concerned about the impact on people who don't have gardens and like to walk here, at all times.

Impact on Thanington Neighbourhood Resource Centre

Thanington Resource Centre is not under direct threat of development by the plan, but we are very concerned about the impact on the Centre if the location is not surrounded by the greenspace, playpark, skatepark and ballpark. We would not want to take children there if the Centre were situated in a busy Park and Ride, because of the car hazards, and the lack of space for my children to play. We would be hesitant to use the Centre's great facilities like children's birthday parties at special residents' rates, or the play programmes in school holidays, during both the construction stage of the Park and Ride, or when the Park and Ride existed.

Thanington is a deprived area which has a long history of being undervalued, which Paula who manages the Resource Centre has researched. As residents, we find great resilience in the community and strong family values and community spirit, but one of the most difficult

aspects of areas of deprivation to change is the poverty of aspiration. We think the Plan is like pouring cold water on the aspirations of people in the community.

Secondly, although Thanington Resource Centre is not under direct threat of development by the Plan, we do have concerns about the future of the Centre due to the financial impact to the charity by the development. The charity has a very effective business model, which pays for charitable activities using their rooms being booked for meetings by outside agencies. We were speaking to a trustee of the Resource Centre, he said "I would expect to see a reduction in the amount of room bookings made by outside agencies who want to meet there as a result of the construction and long term development, because people don't usually want to meet and be interrupted by the sounds and sights and smells of construction, or the sight of a Park and Ride, rather than a greenspace. I expect in the long-term this may threaten the future of the Centre."

Community cohesion and stability

We feel we have already demonstrated that the loss of the green space at Thanington Rec would very negatively affect people's mental wellbeing. It cannot be mitigated by the fact that the sports facilities will be provided at Merton Park, that is too far away for people who don't drive to be accessible or provide a meaningful substitute. Also, the loss of the 100+ mature trees in Thanington Resource Centre is very bad for our general wellbeing and can't quickly be mitigated by new development at Merton Park.

We think that Thanington Resource Centre would be less likely to be used by local people is a significant barrier to the effectiveness of the current Plan, and should be prioritised if the Planning Team value people's wellbeing. However, the longer-term threat the Centre would be under from financial pressure as room bookings fall away, as outlined by the trustee above, would be a severe detriment to the wellbeing of the community long term. We hate to be disparaging about the area in which we live, which is full of people who are kind and compassionate, but we would like to remind you that thirty years ago, Thanington was known locally as 'Little Beirut'. We encourage you to visit Thanington Resource Centre, and speak to Paula Spencer the Manager. Paula has evidence from eyewitness testimony and newspaper cuttings, that since Thanington Resource Centre started providing free youth clubs for young people, the reduction in crime in Thanington has been phenomenal. The area is no longer known as Little Beirut, and is a safe place for people to live.

Should the worst happen and if crime levels were to rise again, this would create new and significant financial costs for Canterbury City Council in partnership with the police and other statutory services, to solve a problem of crime that does not currently exist, due to the community cohesion and kindness fostered in Thanington.

We believe there are better alternatives, e.g. upgrading the existing car park to a two-storey building, or use of Brownfield sites at Chartham Hatch or Cockerling Farm. We urge you to make efforts in understanding the value of Thanington Recreation Ground as it currently is in this interconnected deprived area, and to take the long-term view in developing a community.

Kind regards,

Bethany and Quentin Ma

Residents in Saxon Fields