

To whom it may concern,

As CEO of Thanington Neighbourhood Resource Centre for the past 25 years, I have a duty to comment on CCC's proposal to replace the existing P&R with a new one, right outside our door on the Thanington recreation ground.

This plan would not only be disastrous for the area - our only green space, but also for the Resource Centre; a very successful charity which has changed the face of Thanington completely. When I got the keys in 2000 the estate was a 'no go' area, where police and buses wouldn't come, and youth-centred crime and anti-social behaviour was out of control. There were many front-page headlines regarding riots and confrontations with police, however within 2 years the crime figures had reduced by 50% and have remained that way ever since. This was purely down to the Centre and it's youth clubs and services for local families. This fact has been recognised nationally and internationally, and I have been asked to speak about it at National Safety Conferences in the UK and across Europe (thanks to Christchurch University, which highlighted our work as recognised and acknowledged 'best practice'). We have created jobs, skills and training for many, many local people, including very successful apprenticeships, over a 25-year period..

Thanington is now an attractive area to live, however the social housing estate is still in the top 10% most deprived areas in the UK, with poverty and illiteracy still very apparent. The Resource Centre, which is resident-led provides food banks, fuel vouchers and hot meals for many residents, as well as daily support and advocacy. We also host a range of community events for local families and the children and young people - who incidentally are our biggest demographic. The youth club provides a safe space for our young residents and a summer programme of trips and activities; especially important for those who don't have annual holidays or who have no gardens or space to play. **This is all done by renting out rooms for training and meetings, we do not rely on grants or trusts and foundations to support us. We are entirely independent.**

**If this plan goes ahead the Centre would not survive the years of building work- the noise, pollution, dust and turmoil would prevent anyone from wanting to hire our space. The community work we do in the area and the local services we provide; 12 hours a day, 6 days a week for 360 days of the year will all be lost.**

With all this in mind, why would a local council, made up of local people choose to concrete over this site for the sake of 900 vehicles? Why on earth would they demolish the only green space our children and families have? Why would they destroy the work we do, which saves the local authorities and services a fortune? Why would they choose us? It's because it's easy. The people I work alongside are from a deprived and often traveller background - and they have no funds, influence or voice to protest. of course, there are many other arguments for this ill-considered and to say the least, unjustified and ambiguous scheme, including its lack of sustainability, the council's own policies on green space protection and promoting healthy and safe communities, but ahead of all that goes this amazing community and these struggling families. To even consider this plan shows an unbelievable lack of imagination and insight, an inconceivable lack of care and responsibility for the next generation and quite frankly an insult to society and humanity. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

*Paula Spencer, CEO/Manager,  
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Charity No: 1155263 [www.thaningtonnrc.co.uk](http://www.thaningtonnrc.co.uk)

*Celebrating 25 amazing years in 2025*