



North Cray Residents Association
www.northcrayresidents.org.uk
(email: committee@northcrayresidents.org.uk)

Licensing Team
2a Hadlow Road
Sidcup
Kent DA14 4AF

7 June 2011

Dear Sirs

Licence Application number 11/00278/LI – Premises Licence, Foots Cray Meadows

Please accept this letter as the North Cray Residents Association's formal objection to the above application for the granting of a Premises Licence to Bexley's Parks and Open Spaces (department) for Foots Cray Meadows (the premises).

The reasons for this objection are based, primarily, on concerns regarding:

- The prevention of crime and disorder,
- Public Safety, and
- The prevention of public nuisance.

In addition, this letter of objection reflects the significant level of concern and incredulity contained in communications to this Association from local residents as to the proposed and potential use of the Meadows and the detrimental impact this will likely have on an area of outstanding natural beauty, a Grade II listed 'open space' within a conservation area and a protected nature reserve.

The key issues prompting our Objection are:

- The proposed application will allow Bexley Council to grant permission for large private and commercial events throughout the year on Foots Cray Meadows without any necessity to consult with local residents and associations/bodies.
- The current application's conditions appear to place no restrictions on the number of events each year except that only 12 can be for events attracting more than 3000 people – but that can be changed later by a new application. Moreover, although only 12 outdoor events can go beyond 18.00 hours (again subject to later change) unlimited indoor events can go on to 23.00 hrs + additional time for clearing the area.

This would cause significant distress to local residents and would create a major public nuisance. **As such the conditions are totally inadequate.**

- The licence would allow events such as plays, films, concerts, other live music and dancing, sports, firework displays – all potentially attracting large crowds requiring significant and detrimental changes to the Meadows and its surrounds, i.e.:
 - The need to cater for high levels of parking (on top of that possibly being arranged with Cleeve Park School) creating congestion and local/surrounding roads, many of which are unsuitable for this purpose,
 - The provision of suitable number of toilet facilities and the construction of new pathways, signage, refreshment facilities, vehicular access – **all damaging the unique nature of Foots Cray Meadows.**
 - The building/erection of indoor arena/facilities – if not immediately, it will only be a matter of time.
- The potential for disturbance, damage (both to property, the Five Arches Bridge and wildlife habitat) and vandalism in, and around, an area which is an open space and almost impossible to effectively police,
- The desecration of the Meadows by litter – see this extract from a submission to the Association from a local resident (Ms D Ronchetti, 5 The Grove, Sidcup)

“Foots Cray Meadows has been awarded the Green Flag in recent years because it is an area of outstanding natural beauty. This beauty, and the safety of the wildfowl currently afforded protection at the Meadows, will be compromised by allowing visitors in the numbers anticipated by the Application. With the greatest respect, the Council and/or its contractors struggle to clear the debris left behind by 50 or 60 picnickers on Bank Holiday weekends. After a weekend of fine weather there are always piles of rubbish left around the areas designated as wildfowl protection sites: rubbish such as used disposable barbecues, food packaging and plastic bags, drinks cans and glass bottles, half-eaten chicken legs, soiled nappies and “wet wipes”. To compound the problem, the grassed areas are often mown without the rubbish first being cleared, resulting in broken glass and sharp metal strips laying concealed in the grass, posing a health hazard to children and animals”.
- The possibility of the pollution of the River Cray,
- The risk of gates to the meadows being left open/unattended allowing ‘travellers’ to invade the Meadows as has happened in the recent past – especially if new access roads/pathways are constructed.

It is evident that this application for a premises licence is not just about regulatory compliance for the handful of current low-key charitable events and the staging of a proposed single Shakespearian play, as had initially been suggested by Bexley Council. It is both our, and many local residents’, view that this application is likely to be a precursor to Bexley Council’s Parks Department making full use of Foots Cray Meadows by licensing the staging of regular events without due consideration for their effect on local residents or its responsibility for protecting the Meadows.

We already have more suitable venues for events within Bexley, complete with appropriate supporting infrastructure. There is, therefore, no need to put at risk what is an area of outstanding natural beauty and a protected wildlife habitat, and cause distress to local residents through noise and light pollution, loss of privacy (adjoining residencies), traffic congestion, and general civil disturbance – particularly from late evening events where alcohol is available.

We suggest, before any further action is taken, that there should be a public meeting where local residents can make their views known to the Council and where it, in turn, can give appropriate reassurances that the ‘protections’ they require will be implemented.

Yours faithfully

David Cook
Chairman