

The first five years! What has SCRA achieved since its foundation in November 2008? In this special edition we look back – and consider the future.

RIDLANDS FARM and the 'FOOTBALL HUB'

Canterbury City Council originally purchased Ridlands Farm for housing. However, in the 2006 Local Plan the land was identified as a priority area for new public playing fields. But two years later CCC suddenly proposed instead to use it for a commercial sports complex – the 'Football Hub'. Local outrage galvanized formation of SCRA. Following vigorous opposition – and our work in pointing out many weaknesses in the business plan – the Football Hub was scrapped – only to be followed by a new proposal, this time solely for the benefit of Canterbury City Football Club. Eventually, after realisation that the cost to local taxpayers would likely exceed £3 million – not a penny of which the Club would have to pay back – CCC finally got cold feet and pulled the plug. So what next for Ridlands? **We want you to tell us!** Please complete the Questionnaire circulated with this newsletter. Or come along on 20th November (see foot of page overleaf).



Sunday 11 October 2009: SCRA protest at Ridlands Farm. As reported in *KM Gazette* on 15th October 2009, 164 South Canterbury residents voiced their frustration and anger with Canterbury City Council over the 'Football Hub' proposals.

IS THAT ALL THERE IS?

Some people think SCRA is only about Ridlands Farm. Before 2008, the residents of South Canterbury had no collective voice. Now, as a result of forming our Association, we are invited to engage with organisations city-wide, and generate new initiatives – as the following examples show.

Taking localism seriously

SCRA has put South Canterbury 'on the map'. We helped with Canterbury Society's influential *Vision* document, and are supporting other community groups, including the *Kingsmead* campaign. Recently we wrote to the Boundary Commission about the contentious changes to reduce the number of local councillors.

Building a community

SCRA is committed to building and encouraging community spirit. In 2010 we initiated an annual summer garden party, the 'Little Lunch', to which all Members and their guests are invited, and in 2012 we launched our plant and produce sharing events, open to all residents.

Planning applications and the Draft Local Plan

As well as monitoring local planning applications, we have commented in detail on the Draft Local Plan. We also took a lead in forming 'Southern Canterbury Alliance'. SCA led in turn to ACRA – the Alliance of Canterbury Residents Associations. ACRA has brought all leading local residents groups together to debate the DLP, including CCC's proposals for 4000 new homes in Barton and Nackington.

SCA was originally formed by Barton RA, Hilltop Iffin Merton & New House Lanes' Action Group, Langton & Nackington RA, Oaten Hill DS, SCRA, and Thanington Without Civil Parish Council. The main purpose of SCA is to defend the interests of the people of Canterbury's 'southern quadrant' with respect to housing developments and the DLP.



In this 2013 photo-call, seven SCA members, including two from SCRA, gathered at Barton Business Park on 2nd April. The "park", most of it still farmland, is one of the prime targets for thousands of new houses and flats in southern Canterbury.

Photo by Ed Targett [© Kent Messenger]

Parking

SCRA has been involved in consultations with CCC, KCC and K&C Hospital over parking issues, and played a part in introduction of the Hospital's Park & Ride scheme. This December we anticipate contributing to CCC's 'Parking Enforcement Scrutiny Review'.



Friends of Westgate Parks

In 2011 SCRA was invited to help form Friends of Westgate Parks – a new community group essential for making a successful Heritage Lottery Fund bid. The £1.1 million project is now going ahead. By this time next year the parks will be transformed, including a wonderful new adventure playground at Toddlers Cove, and arts, volunteer and education programmes for all age groups. Our experience of this scheme will be invaluable in trying to get public open space at Ridlands.

(see <http://www.westgateparks.co.uk/>).

WHAT NEXT?

South Canterbury Residents can take some comfort from SCRA's representation over the past five years ensuring the City Council was aware of the opposition to the Ridlands Farm schemes, to oversized and inappropriate residential developments, the reduction in councillor numbers, and to concerns about the Draft Local Plan. Attempting to balance 'nimbyism' with vision is difficult, but we will pursue opportunities over the next five years to ensure the community is as cohesive as possible, is served better through amenities such as open spaces, and cares more for the environment. Tree planting in association with Oaten Hill & District Society, a concerted effort to transform Milton Road, and an increasing number and variety of communal and sharing events will realise a better South Canterbury for all. Please help ensure *localism works*.

PICTURES anticlockwise from top right:

Trees are great for reducing air pollution. Can we plant more?

Happy plant sharers on 7th May 2010.

Little Lunch, South Canterbury Road, 9th June 2013. The weather was cold, but the food was wonderful and the company great!

Another happy sharer (18th August 2013)



The SCRA 2013 Annual General Meeting will take place in the Upper Hall, St Mary Bredin Church, Nunnery Fields, on Wednesday 20th November. Doors open to Members from 7.30 pm; business meeting at 7.45. **From 8.15 the meeting is open to all South Canterbury residents, to join our Open Forum discussion on the future of Ridlands Farm (at 8.30 pm).** The meeting will end with a musical entertainment by our very own *Clarinet Marmalade*. Light refreshments available.

Whether you plan to come along on 20th or not, do please fill out and return the attached Questionnaire about Ridlands Farm — and if you want to re-new your SCRA membership, or fancy joining our growing band for the first time, you can use the Membership Form on the reverse.