

New homes, offices, jobs and a hub for youth cricket planned for 'Glaxo' site

...but residents fear over development and more pollution

RIPE FOR DEVELOPMENT? The GlaxoSmithKline site could be the centre for cricket and (inset) Kent County captain Rob Key.



UP TO 200 jobs could be created if 24 acres of land is transformed into a state-of-the-art cricket training centre, as well as housing and offices, but residents fear it will turn their leafy suburb into a 'polluted mess'.

Intentions for the former GlaxoSmithKline site in South Eden Park Road, Beckenham, were announced on Monday by its new owners — property companies Essential Land and Altyon who have combined to form project manager Altyssen.

It says it would also like to see the former research and development site, which will have a value of £150million once finished, become a hub for youth cricket.

As well as the housing and offices it would include a ground, a pavilion and lawns set in six acres of land — all with the River Beck running through it.

But residents who have witnessed the area become significantly more built-up over the past three decades said they are worried about pollution and traffic.

Retired British Airways manager Martin Trodd, of South Eden Park Road, said: "Everybody is building everywhere they can. It has to end sometime. We are being encroached upon."

"I'm not in favour of it — I've been here for 35 years and I don't want it to become more polluted. It's becoming a mess — there is so much rubbish thrown by the river already. I am a green person and it frightens me."

The River Beck is one of the tributaries of the River Ravensbourne and residents say the green surroundings are the reason they like living in Beckenham and are worried about it becoming over-populated.

Retired building contractor Tom Scanlan, of South Eden Park Road, 66, said: "I'm not keen on office blocks. It wouldn't suit the area. I have been here for 30 years — the road used to be a lane but it's got a lot busier."

by **KATE NELSON**
kate.nelson@archant.co.uk

Engineer Derek Gray, of South Eden Park Road, said: "The area is already too populated. The area is idyllic but it won't be if we keep building housing. The infrastructure of the area could not support that sort of thing but I imagine that will come up in the planning application. Traffic is a problem."

Altyssen has described the site, which has many trees, as an 'idyllic setting for workers and residents' which would provide employment in the area.

There are cricket clubs in the close vicinity including Beckenham and Kent County, which uses land in Worsley Bridge Road and the developers envisage these clubs forming the basis for the centre of excellence.

Cricket Foundation director of operations Steve Peyman said, "We're in the very early stages of discussions but welcome all opportunities to bring the educational benefits of cricket to children in the local area."

State schools in Kent are really embracing cricket. In 2010, nearly 15,000 boys and girls in 103 schools played competitive cricket through the Chance to Shine programme and we hope it will continue to thrive for years to come."

Plans at a glance

- Developers Altyssen say up to 200 jobs could be created when the 24-acre site in South Eden Park Road
- The site could comprise of a cricket ground, a pavilion, luxury and affordable housing and office facilities.
- The surrounding cricket clubs including Beckenham and Kent County could form a 'centre for excellence' for youth cricket
- Planning permission is expected to be submitted around the end of the year
- Kent County captain Robert Key played all junior cricket at nearby Beckenham before making his debut for Kent at 19 in 1998. He is still a frequent visitor at Beckenham cricket ground during the summer months

Planning permission is not expected to be submitted until the end of the year, following public consultation and a three-year build programme would begin in 2012, if all goes to plan. Other ideas for the site include private and affordable housing.

Managing director at Essential Land, Darryl Flay, said: "Our vision is to create a high quality scheme that will harmonise perfectly with the local area and bring investment, work and new facilities to Beckenham."

The developers claim their plans will bring the site back into 'vibrant and sustainable use' and deliver 'a balanced and complimentary mixture of employment, leisure, residential, community and other uses'.

The private housing would use the 'design-guide' model used during the 1920s to build properties in Keston Park, Farnborough Park and Langley Park. Once a buyer has purchased a plot, they could either self-build using their own contractors and architects or use the services of the developers to design their homes.



LEAFY: Tom Scanlan fears more traffic.

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