

Gravesham Borough Council Planning Department

Case Number: 20240661

Case Officer: Lisa Fisher

Response to Environmental Protection Comments

Noise and Field Management Plan

In response to the comments regarding noise and field management, we have engaged **JG Acoustics Ltd**, a professional acoustic consultancy firm, to produce a detailed **Noise Management Report**

The report reflects our ongoing commitment to responsible field management and ensuring that the field remains a positive addition to the area.

Gate Entrance

The field operates a secure, two-gate access system designed to prevent unauthorized entry and ensure user safety:

1. **First Gate:** This gate is positioned at the top of a private track. Users are required to close and lock this gate immediately after entering. This process ensures that access to the track and field is restricted at all times.
2. **Field Gate:** Located 50 meters further along the track to the right, the field gate provides entry to the exercise area. Users must again close and lock this gate upon entering the field.

Both gates are secured with padlocks, and the gate codes are only provided to users once a booking is completed. For added security, the field gate code is changed on a weekly basis.

This system ensures that the field remains private, secure, and safe for authorized users, while also preventing disturbances to the local community or farm operations.

Booking System

All bookings for the field are managed through our website using the Wix platform. This system provides a streamlined user experience while enabling us to track and manage all sessions effectively.

To complete a booking, users must make full payment upfront and agree to our **Terms and Conditions**, which are sent to them automatically upon booking. These terms outline the rules and expectations for field use to ensure a safe and responsible experience for all users.

Our booking options are tailored to accommodate different needs:

- **1-4 dogs:** A standard booking for individual use or small groups.
- **5-8 dogs:** For larger groups or professional dog walkers managing multiple dogs.
- **XL Bully Breeds:** A specific session for owners of this breed with additional safety requirements.

Please note that the **9-12 dog session** has been permanently removed from our website to ensure sessions remain manageable and safe.

The booking system is robust, transparent, and designed to ensure that all users understand and adhere to the rules of the field.

XL Bully Breeds

To meet the requirements of our insurance provider, owners of XL Bully breeds must provide proof of Exemption and valid Insurance prior to their session. If these documents are not submitted, the booking is cancelled, and entry is not permitted.

When appropriate documentation is provided, XL Bully breeds are allowed to exercise in the field off-lead and muzzle-free, as per our **Terms and Conditions**, which are underwritten by our insurance company. This policy ensures both compliance with safety regulations and fairness to dog owners.

By strictly enforcing these guidelines, we provide a safe and inclusive environment for all users of the field.

Time Slots

Each booking includes a one-hour session, with a built-in **15-minute buffer** between bookings to prevent user overlap and ensure a smooth transition between sessions.

For example:

- **First booking:** 7:00–8:00 am
- **Buffer time:** 8:00–8:15 am

This pattern is repeated throughout the day, allowing users sufficient time to arrive, unload their dog(s), exercise in the field, and depart before the next user arrives.

This structure has been in place since we opened and ensures that all users enjoy an uninterrupted, private experience in the field.

Opening Hours

Our opening hours are seasonal to align with daylight availability:

- **Winter Hours:** 7:00 am – 4:45 pm
- **Summer Hours:** 7:00 am – 7:30 pm

Sessions are only available during daylight hours, ensuring safety and visibility for users. We are in the process of updating our website to clearly reflect these seasonal adjustments.

This approach ensures that our operations remain safe, responsible, and considerate of the local area.

Waste Disposal

All users are responsible for cleaning up after their dogs. They are required to monitor their dogs at all times and promptly collect any waste, which they must take home for proper disposal.

To assist users, we provide **poo bag dispensers** at multiple locations around the field in case a user forgets or runs out of bags. **At the end of each day**, the field is thoroughly checked by the owners to remove any waste that may have been left behind.

These measures ensure that the field remains clean, hygienic, and enjoyable for all users.

Daily Field Checks

The field is inspected **daily** by the owners to ensure it is safe, clean, and well-maintained. These inspections include:

- Collecting and disposing of any waste left behind.
- Checking and restocking poo bag dispensers.
- Inspecting fences, gates, and equipment for any damage or wear.
- Performing any necessary repairs immediately.

These routine checks demonstrate our commitment to maintaining a high-quality facility that meets the expectations of all users.

Supervision

Users are required to supervise their dog(s) at all times while in the field. This rule is clearly outlined in our **Terms and Conditions**, which are agreed to at the time of booking.

Our policies are in line with the guidelines provided by www.britishdogfields.com, which have been recommended by you as best practice.

Signage

Signage is installed at the field gate to remind users of the rules and field etiquette, including the requirement to keep gates closed at all times.

To further assist users, we are happy to install an additional sign at the **top gate** to clearly indicate the entrance. This will ensure that users find the field easily and do not disturb local residents by asking for directions.

Professional Dog Walkers (PDW)

An enclosed field provides a safe, controlled environment for dogs, particularly when introducing new dogs to a group setting. It eliminates the risks associated with uncontrolled interactions often encountered in public spaces, ensuring a stress-free experience for both the dogs and the PDWs.

Professional Dog Walkers carefully assess the temperament, behaviour, and compatibility of each dog before introducing them into a group. This process ensures that all dogs can exercise freely and safely within the field. The enclosed area not only offers the physical security of a fenced boundary but also creates an enriching environment for dogs to engage in natural behaviours, such as running, playing, and exploring, without the risk of outside distractions or conflicts.

The rise in poorly trained and poorly bred dogs post-Covid has made safe, enclosed spaces even more vital. During the pandemic and its aftermath, an increase in demand for dogs led to overbreeding, which often resulted in behavioural and socialization issues due to a lack of proper training and early interaction. These factors, combined with the growing number of out-of-control dogs in public spaces, have created significant challenges for PDWs when exercising groups of dogs. Enclosed fields help address these challenges, offering a secure environment that promotes responsible dog care and allows PDWs to fulfil their duties effectively.

Additionally, enclosed fields are especially beneficial for dogs that may be reactive or require gradual reintroduction to group settings. The absence of external stimuli such as unfamiliar dogs or crowds ensures a calm and controlled environment, which is ideal for their development and well-being.

It is important to note that other local enclosed fields allow Professional Dog Walkers to use their facilities without any restrictions. Our field operates similarly, ensuring that PDWs and their clients have access to a safe, private space for dog exercise, while we conduct regular checks to maintain compliance with our policies.

Dog Training and Agility

The field is used solely for private owners and Professional Dog Walkers. No professional dog training or agility companies use the field.

Private owners may use the field for independent training, such as teaching puppies or rehabilitating rescue dogs. However, Professional Dog Walkers use the field exclusively for exercise, not training.

We conduct regular spot checks to ensure compliance with this policy.

Fencing

The field is enclosed with 2-meter-high fencing, which meets the required standard and is comparable to other local enclosed fields.

We do not believe the use of concrete posts and gravel boards is necessary, the use of concrete posts and gravel boards is an excessive measure and no other local fields use these as a fencing option. The land is on a private agricultural farm which we rent a small area of. There are no legal documents that state that concrete posts and gravel boards must be used for an enclosed dog field. We are committed to maintaining the current fencing. We promptly repair or replace damaged sections as needed and are willing to install small-gauge stock fencing to cover the top meter of the existing fence if required.

Timber fence posts are regularly inspected and replaced when necessary to ensure the site is secure.

This approach ensures the safety and security of all users.

Gate

The gate system has been carefully designed and tested to ensure it is secure. However, the gate has been problematic due to the **natural incline of the land**, which has created challenges in achieving a completely level fit. Currently, the gap at the bottom is less than 1 inch when the secure flaps are locked, and this has been tested with a small Dachshund puppy to confirm compliance. we would like to state we have had zero escapes from the gate or field since we opened.

To further enhance security and address these minor issues, we are in the process of re-installing the gate to open outward. This adjustment will reduce the gap even further and ensure a safer, more secure environment for all users.

CCTV

We are installing a **Reolink CCTV system** to provide 24-hour monitoring of the field. Cameras will be installed at the entrance and at three additional points within the field, allowing us to detect unauthorized access and monitor user behaviour.

This system ensures that we can take immediate action if any issues arise, such as banning users who fail to comply with our rules.

Stile

The stile mentioned in the report will be removed to address any concerns.

Lighting

No lighting will be installed, as the field operates **exclusively during daylight hours**. This ensures minimal environmental impact and eliminates the risk of light pollution.

We hope this response addresses all concerns and demonstrates our commitment to responsible field management.

Kind regards,
Lorraine Johns & Angie White