

Council killjoys warn parents they face fine if their kids play football in the street

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A kickabout in the street has been a joy for generations of children with energy to burn.

But for youngsters in one suburban street, the simple pleasure has been outlawed after council killjoys decreed their traditional playtime game of soccer "posed a danger" to the public.

The heartbroken children of Utah Close in Glenfield, Leicester, have also been ordered to remove any toys from the street, including dolls and bikes, because they too are a "hazard".

Officials have warned parents in the 15-home cul-de-sac that they face a £100 fine if their sons and daughters flout the ban.



Football in the street: a tradition going back generations. Picture posed by models

Leicestershire County Council informed residents by letter. They were told even "jumpers for goalposts" must be "removed from the road immediately" because they are classed as obstructions.

The authority says its tough stance is backed by Section 161 of the Highways Act 1980 which states: "Any person depositing anything on the highway or playing football on the highway is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine."

Residents said their children, whose nearest park is more than a quarter of a mile away, are being robbed of their childhood and branded the ban an example of the nanny state gone mad.

Sales manager Ian Fenton, 42, who has three sons, aged, six, seven and 12, said: "They are treating our children and us as if we are criminals.

"We want our children playing where we can see them. We moved here so that there was a nice, safe environment for them to play in, where they could interact with other children their own age.

"Playing in the street is something that has gone on for generations in this country. Now the council want to take it away. It's ludicrous."

Mr Fenton's six-year-old son Morgan, said: "I'm very sad about what has happened, because football is my favourite game.

"I wanted to play outside with my brothers, but we're not allowed to put our jumpers down. I have to stay indoors instead. I think it's very unfair."

Tim Cory, 39, who has two sons, aged seven and nine, said: "I don't know where the boys are going to go now.

"If they play on the road in front of the houses they are nice and safe and we all know where they are."

Diane Elliot, 36, whose nine-year-old son suffers from autism, said: "I like to be able to keep an eye on my son at all times.

"I don't let him play out without me watching. I don't want him to go to the park, because I don't know if he will get on with the other children."

The ban follows complaints passed on by the parish council, although none of the cul de sac's residents is understood to have complained about games in the street themselves.

Passing motorists, drivers using the cul-de-sac and to turn around in and residents of neighbouring streets are thought to be the source of the complaints.

A county council spokesman said: "The parish council has been contacted several times in recent years about children setting up goalposts that were blocking the road.

"It is rare to issue such warnings, and they would be considered only in a case where a persistent problem has been reported by other residents."

The spokesman said the children were "potentially compromising the safety of highway users and causing a nuisance to other residents".

But Mr Fenton said: "The children use the goalposts specifically so the ball is not going on to the main road. They are clearly not a danger, they are just a frustration to some impatient individuals."

He vowed to let his children continue playing in the street and to refuse to pay the fine.