



Open Space

*An occasional newsletter of the
Aldborough Hatch Defence Association
Issue 17 – November 2006*

Aldborough Hatch Farm next for gravel?

With gravel extraction nearing completion on Aldborough Hall Farm, the Aldborough Hatch Defence Association has received confirmation from the Borough's Property Management Department that Aldborough Hatch Farm is being considered as the next area for extraction.

In a statement at the beginning of October, the Association was advised that "Brett Lafarge have carried out borehole investigations and a soil survey at Aldborough Hatch Farm in order to establish the amount of mineral reserve at this property. Further discussions are taking place currently between the Council and Brett Lafarge in order to consider the viability of future gravel extraction at Aldborough Hatch Farm as the next phase, following the completion of mineral extraction at Aldborough Hall Farm. The issue of Environmental Impact and Stand off would be addressed in an Environmental Statement and any future Planning Application for further mineral working."

Oaks Lane, Aldborough Road North and St. Peter's Close abut onto Aldborough Hatch Farm with residential properties and the listed building of St. Peter's Church. Residents with long memories – and there are many hereabouts! – will recall that some 30 years ago we were threatened with gravel extraction down as far as the church path on the other side of the hedge from St. Peter's Church and St. Peter's Close. The Association mounted a campaign to convince the Council that there should be a 300 metre stand off from St. Peter's Church – and we won the day! Extraction stopped opposite the Dick Turpin.

If a planning application is submitted to extract gravel on Aldborough Hatch Farm, the Association will work with the Council to ensure that an acceptable stand off is agreed from homes and St. Peter's Church. There is the precedent of 300 metres as mentioned above and the stand off of 150 metres from the rear of the houses in Applegarth Drive and Bawdsey Avenue agreed in 2001.

The Racecourse is dead in the water!

The eight year long fight to stop the development of an all-weather racecourse at Fairlop Waters ended in victory last month when Redbridge Council agreed to buy back the lease. This means that the Public Inquiry due to take place next January is cancelled.

At an extraordinary meeting of the Council on Wednesday 18th October, Council Officers were given authority to conclude negotiations with Grant Thornton, the Administrators, who have operated the site for the last year. On Monday 23rd October Leader of the Council, Councillor Alan Weinberg confirmed that the site *"will be back in the Council's direct control"*. Commenting that the racecourse *"was never popular with local people, was opposed by the Council, and never seemed to be in the interests of Redbridge,"* Councillor Weinberg said: *"We have stopped the plan in its tracks,"* adding *"we will improve the site and its facilities for the local community."*

In a statement, the Council confirmed that it will have full control of Fairlop Country Park and its associated facilities. It went on to say that this brings to a conclusion an unsatisfactory relationship with a lessee who has not shared the Council's vision for Fairlop. The Council will now seek to maximise the leisure and recreational potential for the facilities, and also its overall potential in terms of the wider regeneration agenda for the borough. The Council will look at the infrastructure and operation of the site before making any decisions on its future, and intends to consult the local community fully in all aspects of the site's future potential use and development.

The Council will operate the facility in broadly the same manner as at present for a period of a minimum of four months while it reviews all possible options. The Council's aim is to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and overall standards of the Country Park and its facilities.

In a joint statement with Barkingside 21, the Aldborough Hatch Defence Association said: *"We congratulate Redbridge Council on taking back the lease. We are pleased that the Leader of the Council has stated publicly that the Council will now take full control of all the facilities at Fairlop Waters. It is very good news that the Council will not seek to sell the lease to another developer, but will retain control and improve the site and its facilities for the local community. That is precisely what we have been fighting for over the past eight years."*

"We would wish to pay tribute to the Councillors who have supported our determination to retain this much valued stretch of Green Belt. We note that the Council intend to consult with the local community. Our two organisations will be pleased to work with the Council. In congratulating the Council, we look to Councillors and Council Officers to rise to the challenge and have the vision to take this once in a lifetime opportunity to ensure that Fairlop Waters is developed for the benefit of the whole community and that the Green Belt is retained for generations to come."

Much needs to be done. The two residents' groups will be looking to the Council to improve the facilities at the sailing lake where a new boathouse and modern changing facilities are desperately needed for families, schools and youth groups. The country park needs to be properly maintained so that wildlife can flourish and the public may take full advantage of this unique asset on our doorstep. Where land released from gravel extraction is not required for farming, an extension of the country park should be explored. An information and visitors' centre, an enlarged golf clubhouse and family restaurant would enhance the facilities for community use. Improvements such as