



Open Space

*An occasional newsletter of the
Aldborough Hatch Defence Association*
Issue 8 – September 2002

You are invited to the
**Aldborough Hatch Defence
Association**

Public Meeting

**Friday 20th September
2002 at 8pm**

**St. Peter's Church Halls
Aldborough Road North**

Speakers

Linda Perham MP

MP for Ilford North

Councillor Keith Axon

Leader of the Council

Councillor Elaine Norman

Leader of the Opposition

Councillor Richard Hoskins

Leader of the Liberal Democrats

*Your opportunity to hear the latest in the
fight to keep the racecourse off
Fairlop Plain. What happens next?
What are the Council's plans should the
judicial review fail?*

London City Racecourse Minister rejects plans for Racecourse – but Wiggins to Appeal

The announcement that Wiggins PLC has lost its appeal to build the London City Racecourse at Fairlop Waters came on 31st July – but within days hopes that the three year battle to save the local Green Belt took a nose-dive with news from the developers that they were consulting lawyers with a view to taking the Deputy Prime Minister to judicial review over his decision to reject the Planning Inspector's Report which gave the go-ahead to the plans.

As we go to press with this issue of *Open Space* it is uncertain whether or not Wiggins PLC will go to the High Court for judicial review. If they do so, the case could be heard towards the end of the year.

As promised in *Open Space*, Issue 7, November 2001, the Aldborough Hatch Defence Association is staging a Public Meeting now that the Planning Inspector's Report has been published. If Wiggins PLC decide not to appeal – or if the appeal is not allowed – the question then is what happens on Fairlop Waters?

If the final decision goes in our favour, the debate about the future of the Green Belt of Fairlop Plain will continue – and residents will wish to have their input into that debate. If the decision goes against us, Redbridge Council still has the last word over the lease. Also, it has to be recognised that so far only outline planning permissions have been sought and there will be the need to monitor every planning application put in by the developers.

The Public Meeting will be held at St. Peter's Church Halls on Friday 20th September at 8pm. By that time we should know whether or not Wiggins PLC is going to judicial review.

The Association urges all residents to attend the Public Meeting to hear how our local MP and the elected leaders of Redbridge Council view the future of Fairlop Waters. Please encourage your friends to be at the Public Meeting so that local politicians are aware of the strength of feeling in the area.

Extracts from statements issued by the Aldborough Hatch Defence Association

The announcement that the Planning Inspector had allowed the appeal by Wiggins PLC, but that the Inspector's Report had been rejected by Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, came late on the afternoon of Wednesday 31st July.

The Association issued an immediate statement as follows: "This is a victory for commonsense. This project would have brought devastation to the Green Belt of Fairlop Plain and the openness of the nearby countryside.

"At a time when urban sprawl desperately needs to be curtailed, it would have been a matter little short of vandalism that what little open countryside there is left for the enjoyment of residents would be desecrated with the erection of a grandstand and ancillary buildings that would have completely changed the character of this area for ever.

"The residents of Aldborough Hatch fought this ill-founded proposal tooth and nail from the start. We are grateful to the many residents – both in Aldborough Hatch and further afield – who supported our determination to fight."

Bold and imaginative

Next day the Association issued a further statement: "The Association has been pleased to note that, when giving his reasons for overturning the Planning Inspector's decision, Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott has upheld the importance of the contribution that Fairlop Waters makes to the Green Belt.

"The Deputy Prime Minister states: 'The additional built development and degree of enclosure would amount to a significant net erosion of the contribution the site makes to the Green Belt. In short, the harmful impact of these proposals on the Green Belt by reason of their inappropriateness and other harm is clear and substantial.'

"This is a clear recognition by the Deputy Prime Minister that the Green Belt of Fairlop Waters will be protected and that Government will not permit inappropriate building development. This gives the residents considerable reassurance that the open countryside of Fairlop Plain will not be eroded."

Looking to the future, the Association said: "Over the past three years whilst Wiggins have held the lease, Fairlop Waters has been allowed to deteriorate with land and buildings being permitted to run down to an unacceptable level. In the Association's view, Wiggins have failed in their responsibilities for maintaining the golf course, country park and restaurant to the high standard that residents expect. We call upon Redbridge Council to insist that Wiggins accept their responsibilities under the lease. If Wiggins fail to do so, the Council should withdraw the lease.

"In addition, the full potential for development of Fairlop Waters as a leisure centre of excellence for the benefit of Redbridge residents should be explored – with or without Wiggins. This will require considerable boldness and imagination. There is a need for appropriate social and leisure facilities whilst retaining the openness of the Green Belt."

Recalling the Association gave evidence to Redbridge Council's consultation on the future development of Fairlop Waters in May 2000, the Association said that it "remains in favour of appropriate development on Fairlop Plain within the context of retaining its openness. We put forward a series of proposals for appropriate social leisure activity development at Fairlop Waters and urge the Council to work to achieve these."

The Association proposes:

- * A much expanded Country Park with a Visitor Information Centre, family refreshment facilities and picnic areas to meet the needs of residents and schools. Fairlop Waters is the habitat of species of rare birds and protected wildlife. The opportunity should be taken to expand this area as a nature reserve.

- * An upgraded 18-hole Golf Course for the use of beginners, families and schools, maintained to a high standard. A low-level clubhouse building would enhance the golf course and encourage much needed financial investment.

- * Additional sports facilities, such as athletics and cycle tracks, to supplement and complement existing provision within the Borough.

- * A more extensive complex of bridle paths for horse riding and footpaths for walkers.

- * The sailing lake is a valued facility for families, individuals, schools and youth groups. The area needs to be maintained to a high standard, from both the aesthetic and safety viewpoints. A modern, low-level building would enhance the facility.

- * A children's adventure play area within a redesigned, purpose-built, modern complex.

Time of uncertainty

The announcement that Wiggins PLC is considering an appeal came on 1st August.

Commenting that the news had been received "with amazement, tinged with sadness," the Association said: "This means yet more uncertainty over the future of Fairlop Waters. We waited patiently for over a year for the decision following the Public Inquiry. Quite rightly, Government took its time to give very careful consideration to all the arguments and came down firmly against the application.

"The Deputy Prime Minister was robust in his reasons for overturning the Planning Inspector's decision. Wiggins should accept the decision – welcomed by the vast majority of Redbridge residents – and get off Fairlop Waters. Whilst they vacillate, Fairlop Waters continues to deteriorate with land and buildings being permitted to run down to an unacceptable level.

"Residents have had enough. Wiggins should get off Fairlop Waters. The sooner the better!"

Answering the scaremongers

Whilst local press coverage of the decision was extensive and well-balanced, some of the scaremongering by those who were disappointed at the Deputy Prime Minister's decision demanded a response.

The following letter from the Association appeared in the *Ilford Recorder* on 15th August: "Local businesses in Barkingside would not have benefited. A 2,000 seater restaurant would have affected the small restaurants in the High Street, whilst contracts for services would have gone to national companies and not local businesses. Many small shops in Barkingside High Street have survived the coming of the large multiples. Let's keep it that way.

"The racecourse was never going to produce massive opportunities for employment. Those who believe it would should read the Inspector's Report. Redbridge Council's evidence at the Public Inquiry (and I quote) was that 'the part-time jobs identified would be casual in nature and only available in relation to 31 race meetings a year. There would be only 48 permanent part-time jobs in conferencing, health and fitness and the new play facility. Even on the generous assumption that these would be equivalent to half-time jobs, the total full time equivalent would only amount to 105, 59 of them not associated with racing. Therefore only limited job creation would result from the appeal proposal making little difference to the Borough's employment rates'.

"As for housing, John Prescott is unequivocal in his concern to protect this piece of valued Green Belt. In his response to the Inspector's Report, he states: 'The additional built development and degree of enclosure would amount to a significant net erosion of the contribution the site makes to the Green Belt. In short, the harmful impact of these proposals on the Green Belt by reason of their inappropriateness and other harm is clear and substantial.' Having made such a robust statement to protect Fairlop Waters, there is no way that a planning application for housing would get past the first hurdle.

"The Aldborough Hatch Defence Association is keen to work with Redbridge Council to ensure that Fairlop Waters retains its openness and offers enhanced leisure facilities for Redbridge residents to enjoy."

Aldborough Hatch Defence Association

For further information on any of the items in this issue please contact
Ron Jeffries, Chairman, 37 Spearpoint Gardens,
Aldborough Road North, Aldborough Hatch, ILFORD, Essex IG2 7SX
TEL: 020 8599 7250; E. mail: ronjeffries@tiscali.co.uk

Produced by SPS Communications, 499 Aldborough Road North,
ILFORD, Essex IG2 7SY (TEL: 020 8590 0299 or 020 8599 6452)