



# Open Space

*An occasional newsletter of the  
Aldborough Hatch Defence Association*

Issue 14 – April 2005

## London City Racecourse Councillors' resounding “No!” to revised application – but Planestation appeal!

**Following last November's decision by the Borough's Regulatory Committee to reject the revised planning application for the London City Racecourse, Planestation Group PLC waited three months until February this year before submitting their appeal to the Secretary of State. All of which means that - some six years on - we are back where we started from!**

The Borough's Planning Department has advised the Association that the appeal is likely to be decided at a public inquiry. All the indications are that any public inquiry will not take place until next year at the earliest.

Which means that the future of Fairlop Waters remains in the air for a further year or so.

The Association decided to wait until we knew whether or not Planestation would appeal before publishing this issue of *Open Space*. Here we will bring residents up to date with what has happened since *Open Space* Issue 13, which was published in September last.

### Standing room only

The Aldborough Hatch Defence Association's Public Meeting on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2004 was a standing-room-only affair. St. Peter's Church Halls in Aldborough Hatch were packed with local residents, who were joined by members of Barkingside 21 and visitors from many parts of Redbridge.

The evening enabled an exchange of views to take place between residents and local politicians on the proposal by developers PlaneStation to build the London City Racecourse at Fairlop Waters. Amongst the speakers were Linda Perham, MP for Ilford North, Councillor Lee Scott, Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Ilford North, Councillor Laurence Davies, Leader of the Council, Councillor Elaine Norman, Leader, Labour Group, Councillor Hugh Cleaver, Leader, Liberal Democrat Group, Roger Evans, Greater London Council Member, and Councillor Vanessa Cole, Aldborough Ward Councillor.

It had been the Association's intention to provide PlaneStation with the opportunity to state its case for the development, but they declined our invitation, preferring to stage a Public Exhibition at Fairlop Waters the previous month. Linda Perham, Lee Scott, Roger Evans and Vanessa Cole spoke out unequivocally against the revised application. The Leaders of the three political parties were prevented for legal reasons from stating their views – but listened intently as speaker after speaker spoke out against the application.

### Summary of objections

At the Public Meeting the Association's Chairman listed the changes that had been made in the revised planning application:

- A reduction in capacity of the grandstand from 20,000 to 8,500 (with capacity for a further 3,500 spectators);
- Parking reduced from 1,773 vehicles to 1,105;
- Height of the grandstand reduced from 37 to 29.8m;
- Length of the grandstand reduced from 1,015 to 400m;
- Two ancillary buildings removed;
- Potential for racing at bank holidays and weekends in addition to the 31 Thursday evening race fixtures envisaged in the first application.

The Chairman then outlined the Association's objections which formed the written submission to the Regulatory Committee. Here is a summary:

#### Green Belt

In spite of the reduced size of the grandstand, this is a totally inappropriate development in an area of designated Green Belt. The buildings and parking areas would seriously reduce the openness of Fairlop Plain within the Green Belt, requiring "special circumstances" to be demonstrated. And such "special circumstances" would include "need". The fact that the all-weather racecourse development at Great Leighs, Chelmsford, has been granted planning permission and is proceeding, with an anticipated opening date in 2005, must raise questions as to whether or not there is "need" for the development at Fairlop Waters. The Association would maintain that there is not.

When the Secretary of State announced his decision to reject the Planning Inspector's recommendations and to dismiss the appeal following the Public Inquiry in June 2001 into the first outline planning application, John Prescott wrote: "*The proposals constitute inappropriate development and will harm the openness of the Green Belt. 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."

### Transport

Some 12,000 racegoers are expected. There will be on site car and coach parking for some 7,000 – leaving 5,000 to travel either by public transport or by car.

Fairlop Station and the Central Line could not cope with additional passengers at peak hour on Thursday evenings. There are no guarantees that Transport for London would improve the access and facilities at Fairlop Station.

It is more likely that the majority of those 5,000 racegoers for whom there are no on-site parking facilities would choose to travel by car. Up to 1,200 or so cars or coaches would seek out on street parking in Barkingside and Aldborough Hatch. The developers refer to "strict enforcement of uncontrolled parking off-site on race days". We do not believe that such enforcement would be practicable nor enforceable.

The developers appear to be labouring under the naïve belief that all car and coach drivers will adhere to signage that they approach the racecourse via the A12 at Barley Lane, Hainault Road and Forest Road. This is unrealistic and they will use a series of rat-runs through busy residential areas.

### Economic

There is uncertainty as to the number of racing fixtures per year. There is mention of 31 Thursday evening race meetings, and racing on bank holidays and at weekends. There is no clear statement supported by the British Horse Racing Board (BHB) as to the number of racing fixtures that will be licensed.

To ensure the economic viability of the proposals it is inconceivable that the development would only be used for race meetings. This is especially so if the BHB does not licence more than 16 or 31 racing fixtures each year. Other use for entertainment, such as pop concerts, exhibitions and conferences would produce unacceptable levels of noise and traffic at all times of day and at weekends.

### Environment

The public open space of Fairlop Waters is much valued by Redbridge residents. Its openness is appreciated and must be protected. The developers have made clear their intention that the general public would be excluded from the area of the racecourse (except when race meetings are in progress), thereby seriously curtailing the public right to roam – something which the Government is actively encouraging at the present time.

There would be a seriously adverse effect on wildlife. We fully support the representations being made by the London Wildlife Trust.

The golf course is used by local schools and for training young people with the potential to develop in the sport. Other local golf courses are fully used and would not have the capacity to provide this facility to schools, young people and pensioners.

### Changes to the road structure.

One at the intersection of Hainault Road and Billet Road, and the second on the A12 itself at Barley Lane. Here PlaneStation wish to demolish a footbridge used by hundreds of people each day. Rather than demolish the footbridge, Transport for London should be adapting the bridge so that it is disabled-friendly.

#### Aldborough Hatch Defence Association

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## Redbridge Regulatory Committee rejects application

The Borough's Regulatory Committee met on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2004 to consider the revised application. Some 120 members of the public heard the debate in the Council Chamber or in the overflow committee room. Among the speakers opposing the application were Councillor Lee Scott, Prospective Parliamentary Candidate, Linda Perham MP, Councillor Vanessa Cole and the Chairmen of the Aldborough Hatch Defence Association and Barkingside 21. Aldborough Ward Councillors John Coombes and Loraine Sladden, who are members of the Committee, both spoke against the application.

The Committee refused planning permission for the following three reasons:

1. *The proposed development, by reason of its excessive scale, extent, use and form would constitute inappropriate development within the Metropolitan Green Belt and would conflict with its purposes to:-*

(i) *safeguard open countryside from encroachment;*  
(ii) *act as a check against the further sprawl of built-up areas;*  
(iii) *prevent the coalescence of neighbouring settlements; and*  
(iv) *assist in urban regeneration*  
*and fail to fulfil its objectives, contrary to Policies OA 1, OA 2, OA 3, OA 4 and OA 9 of this Council's Unitary Development Plan and national planning policy guidance as expressed in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2.*

2. *From the information available to the Council from the application as currently submitted, the proposals to deal with the impact of traffic to and from the site, and the impact on the capacity of public transport are inadequate to prevent an undesirable and unacceptable adverse impact on the local road network and public transport system.*

3. *On the information currently available, the Council is unable to be certain that the proposals will not have an adverse effect on a site of Nature Conservation Importance - Borough Grade 1 without adequate mitigation measures being proposed, causing a direct loss of habitats including open grassland and water bodies as well as indirectly affecting the remaining habitats by reason of increased activity, noise, disturbance and light pollution, contrary to Policies OA 16, OA 17, OA 18 and KR 21 of this Council's Unitary Development Plan as well as directly conflicting with national planning policy guidance as expressed in Planning Policy Guidance Note 9.*

### Brave decision

The Association issued a News Release immediately following the decision, commenting that the news "was received with jubilation and considerable relief by the Association, whose members have fought for five years to keep this valued Green Belt land free from unwanted development."

The Chairman said: "This is a victory for commonsense. The Borough stood to lose one of the last remaining areas of Green Belt open space to an unwanted and potentially unviable racecourse development.

"The Association congratulates Councillors on what was a brave decision. There have been considerable pressures over recent months – with a lot of unfounded and unproved information about the benefits of the development. Councillors voting against the planning application had listened to the large number of residents who were against this development.

"The Association now looks forward to being consulted again on the future of Fairlop Waters – a future that will retain the openness for the benefit of residents for many years to come."

Perhaps that final sentence was over-optimistic as we go back to the drawing board to prepare to fight the appeal by PlaneStation. Once the date and place of the public inquiry is known, we will contact residents through this *Open Space* newsletter.