



# Friends of Pinn Meadows

Dual Designation Debate 2 | March 2015



## Oppose Green Spaces Changes, say FoPM

**A key agenda item for the FoPM meeting on Monday 31 March 2014 at Kings College Pavilion was Hillingdon Council's proposals to amend the Local Plan which would change the current Green Chain policy and re-designate Pinn Meadows and other important green space sites as Metropolitan Open Land (MOL).**

The changes are due to go out to public consultation shortly, when both FoPM and individual members of the public will have the opportunity to submit comments on the proposals before they are reported back to Cabinet for approval.

FoPM believes that the proposed changes in designation significantly weaken the protection of this area against the type of development previously proposed by the Hockey Club which could then argue for its proposed development to be treated as acceptable under the "very special circumstances" rule.

There are already several floodlit and fenced artificial pitches in Hillingdon Borough on Green Belt land, which has similar protection to MOL.

We have suggested therefore that Pinn Meadows should have joint designation as both MOL and Green Chain and that there are precedents for such action in other London boroughs.

In addition to the proposed change in designation from Green Chain to MOL there are now other changes proposed to the Local Plan which may affect the degree of protection afforded to Pinn Meadows.

These changes are set out in the recently published Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2 Draft Development Management Policies. They include proposed changes to the wording of the Green Belt, Metropolitan and Green Chains policy EM2.

This policy was considered to be an improvement and tightening up of the previous Green Chain policy and, when the Hockey Club's last planning application was reported to Planning North Committee on 26 March 2013, this policy was used as one of the grounds for refusal in the officers' report.

However, the newly published Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2 Draft Development Management Policies

now proposes changes as shown in the table at the bottom of this page.

The form of wording of the proposed new Green Chain policy would offer significantly weaker protection to land in Green Chains. It is very similar to the original form of wording of the pre- 2012 Green Chain policy.

When the Hockey Club's 2nd planning application was considered by the case officer he recommended that their application was not contrary to the Green Chain policy then in force.

## Meeting Report

Following contact with Cllr Keith Burrows over the effect of a change of designation for Pinn Meadows from Green Chain to Metropolitan Open Land pitch, a meeting was arranged on 27 November 2014 with senior Council officials to discuss FoPM concerns.

FoPM Chairman Rob Cousins put it to Jales Tippel, Deputy Director of Environmental Policy and James Rodger, Head of Planning and Green Spaces, that the proposed changes would provide a lower level of protection against plans for a second AstroTurf pitch on King's College Playing Field. Following the meeting Rob Cousins circulated the following report.

Jales Tippell said that the public consultation regarding the re-designations hadn't yet started so the meeting was premature and suggested that given the delays with getting Cabinet approval for new Planning Policies, this was likely to be after Christmas.

She advised that she had been asked to give Pinn Meadows the greatest possible protection hence the upgrade to MOL, however we demonstrated that in our case MOL would be a decrease in protection, given the number of EHC type facilities being granted planning permission on MOL (and Green Belt land).

The FoPM team then showed an example of another Borough (Sutton) which has Green Chain sites located on MOL and there are numerous examples of LBH Green Chain sites also being sited on Green Belt land and so we asked if she would consider dual designation (Green Chain and MOL) for Pinn Meadows.

It was obviously something that she hadn't considered at all, however, as it would be an ideal solution for everyone she agreed to explore this. There is no doubt that this would provide the greatest level of protection for Pinn Meadows and we should continue to canvas Councillors and Council Officers to attain it.

FoPM were told by Council Officers that EHC were exploring alternative locations for their new pitch, such as Brunel University. The Club has also been

advised by the Council that the Planning Officers' objection in principle to building on Pinn Meadows could not be overcome, because it is protected by Green Chain policy.

**This is encouraging but emphasises the need for that protection to remain in place**

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## Proposed Changes Mean Weaker Protection

***FoPM believes that the proposed changes in designation significantly weaken the protection of this area against the type of development previously proposed by the Hockey Club. This table shows a summary of what is proposed.***

**Existing Policy** – Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 1- Strategic Policies (Adopted Nov 2012) Policy EM2: Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land and Green Chains

The Council will seek to maintain the current extent, hierarchy and strategic functions of the Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land and Green Chains. Notwithstanding this, Green Chains will be reviewed for designation as Metropolitan Open Land in the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 2- Site Specific Allocations LDD and in accordance with the London Plan policies.

Minor adjustments to Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land will be assessed against national and London Plan policies, including the very special circumstances test.

Any proposals for development in Green Chains will be firmly resisted unless they maintain the positive contribution of the Green Chain in providing a visual and physical break in the built-up area; conserve and enhance appropriate public access and recreational facilities where they are compatible with the conservation value of the area, and retain the openness of the Green Chain."

**Proposed Changes 1** Policy DME14: Development in the Green Belt or on Metropolitan Open Land - Inappropriate development in the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land will not be permitted unless there are very special circumstances.

Extensions and redevelopment on sites in the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land will be permitted only where the proposal would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and

Metropolitan Open Land, and the purposes of including land within it, than the existing development having regard to:

1. The height and bulk of the existing building on the site
2. The proportion of the site that is already developed
3. The footprint, distribution and character of the existing buildings on the site
4. The relationship of the proposal with any development on the site that is to be retained; and
5. The visual amenity and character of the Green Belt, and Metropolitan Open Land.

Policy DME15: Development in Green Chains

**Proposed Changes 2** Development in Green Chains will only be supported if it conserves and enhances the visual amenity and nature conservation value of the landscape, having regard to :

1. The need to maintain a visual and physical break in the built-up area;
2. The potential to improve biodiversity in and around the area
3. The potential to improve public access to and through the area;
4. The provision and improvement of suitable recreational facilities.