



# Friends of Pinn Meadows

Hillingdon Council Meeting | 28 February 2013



## **SPEECH BY MIKE GRIMMEL, LEAD PETITIONER AND VICE-CHAIRMAN OF FRIENDS OF PINN MEADOWS, TO A MEETING FULL OF THE LONDON BOROUGH OF HILLINGDON COUNCIL, 28th FEBRUARY 2013**

Friends of Pinn Meadows are a resident group formed to protect and nurture a unique and diverse landscape. Pinn Meadows extend along the River Pinn corridor from Elmbridge Drive to Bury Street within the Eastcote and East Ruislip Ward and as you are no doubt aware are under threat of development with proposals submitted to construct a second all weather Hockey pitch which includes artificial grass surfacing, 15m high floodlights, a 4.5m high fenced perimeter and additional parking for 29 cars.

Friends of Pinn Meadows have taken an active stance against this grotesque intrusion into an area loved by both local residents, and visitors from further a-field. We have canvassed local opinion and have now collected a petition with over 5,500 signatures opposing the current application. It is very clear the local community do not want this development, and they have said so on more than one occasion and in their thousands.

The Friends of Pinn Meadows, and their supporters are not opposed to sport, or hockey, we are however opposed to the loss of open space which is currently freely accessible to all residents regardless of age or activity level. Fencing off a huge area of the playing fields will restrict access only to those who are either members of the club, or have paid a fee to enter. This is not in the spirit of the conveyance of the area by Kings College Cambridge. The Provost of Kings College states 'I wish you well in your campaign, since this land was given to the people of Ruislip for their common use.' It is perfectly fine to play organised sports on these fields, but to do so at the exclusion of all others is unacceptable.

Pinn Meadows are protected by Green Chain planning policy. There can be no doubt that these proposals are in direct conflict with this policy on every point. You are urged to ensure that a dangerous precedent is not set. In 2011 a 15m Mobile Phone Mast was refused only 200 metres away because it was, and I quote 'an incongruous and visually obtrusive form of development detrimental to the setting of the high amenity value open parkland and playing fields'. So an application for eight 15m masts, a massive mesh cage and plastic grass all within this setting..... surely this must be a straightforward decision There are further issues of Ecology, Noise, Increased traffic, Tree protection, the destruction of the celandine route and Light Pollution, particularly pertinent at this time as EHC have been served notice this month by the Council following repeated instances of leaving the existing pitch floodlights on all night.

Pinn Meadows are also a major floodplain, a topical issue, and a concern for those local residents at risk of flooding. National Planning Policy dictates that development on floodplain must be resisted unless all alternative sites have been exhausted. We find it impossible to believe that there are no alternative sites for this facility outside of a floodplain, therefore the proposal must be refused.

EHC want to play all home matches at Kings College Road, for convenience and so as to improve the social aspect of the club. Compare the occasional inconvenience of playing a couple of matches a week at Brunel University and Harefield Academy within 4 miles of the club, to the permanent inconvenience caused to our community. If the hockey club build a further artificial pitch the overprovision locally will be massive. On a Saturday Middlesex Stadium and RAF Northolt vacant from midday. Stockley Academy vacant from 11.30, Harefield vacant from 10.30 and Brunel vacant all day. And Sundays are even worse with Harefield, Stockley and RAF Northolt completely unused. What will become of these facilities?

Add to this the fact that Hockey is in long term decline with numbers playing hockey in South East England falling by a third since 2008 evident with the hockey club fixture list shrinking. Without opposition to play against it will not be long before the demand for matches will fall below the capacity of the current pitch. So with so much capacity available locally for a dwindling sport who in their right mind would consider building another pitch? And who in their right mind would give them permission to do so.

The hockey club claim this pitch will be a community asset.....not the community we have spoken to. Football is encouraged here only to balance the books, not meet any specific demand. Even with this income they rely on massive handouts from Public bodies, including LBH, handouts totalling over £190,000 since 1996. The second pitch has seen a further £330,000 of public funds offered. Our Money used so that a chosen few users, over three quarters of whom reside outside of this Borough can enjoy a convenient pint together after a match.

Finally what of the current users of the area proposed to be developed, the ramblers, dog walkers, picnickers, bike riders, our future generations.... All of them fenced out. All of them visually assaulted by a second giant carbuncle whilst it is totally unused for 4 months of the year. What of Ruislip Rangers who currently use the playing fields to provide over 400 youngsters with football. Grass pitches will be lost. Matches will be displaced away from Kings College Playing Fields..... this whole thing starts to make very little sense when you think logically about it. We therefore urge you to consider this application very carefully. We urge you to stand against this unnecessary, unwanted and expensive luxury.

You have a chance here, a chance to protect the things that the community truly value. A chance to listen to what really matters to people. A chance to put your residents first.... Please don't let us down. Thank you.

For more information:-

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