

FACTS FROM SAVE OUR STOW ABOUT WALTHAMSTOW GREYHOUND STADIUM

1. We are pleased that the recently issued Walthamstow Greyhound Stadium Urban Design Guidance 'does not preclude the site's continued use as a greyhound stadium, either on its own or as part of a mixed use scheme'. We are also pleased that it recognises the listed frontage and rear kennels and that it demands that there is intervisibility of these features from all parts of the stadium. We are also pleased that it recommends that a central space should be retained, that building heights should be modest/low, that parking cannot be underground, that it should include a significant body of community and leisure facilities for local residents and that it should include a high proportion of family units, which should be terraced houses with room sizes exceeding the minimum guidance. All these points combined, together with the large proportion of social homes that must be included within the site, lead us to conclude that it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to make this site viable for development. We are not happy that the current council's position regarding change of use was not referred to in the document. The Council's policy is that you cannot change a viable employment and leisure site to housing. The accounts prove that the site is financially viable so why was this fundamental point not included in the document? We are asking the council's planners about this. Also, very little was mentioned about the flood risk which is a major area of concern.
2. There is an overwhelming desire from all parts of the community for greyhound racing to remain on the site. We have the full support of all local MP's including Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow) and Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford), as well John Macklin (Lib Dem Deputy Council Leader) and, we understand, the vast majority of councillors. We also handed in a 15,000 strong petition that was arranged hastily over just a 3 week period. Virtually everybody we canvass in the community supports a return to greyhound racing and is fed up with the area being turned in to another concrete jungle.
3. The Greyhound Board of Great Britain has pledged their full support to the campaign to bring back Europe's premier greyhound venue.
4. It is very unfortunate that L&Q's comments have been inconsistent to say the very least about if and when plans are to be submitted. They originally stated that plans would be submitted in late 2008, now estimates range from later this year to sometime next year. Indeed, Jerome Geoghegan's letter of 4 June 2009 to Neil Gerrard MP states that 'we do not expect a planning application to be formally submitted before next year'. The truth is that they cannot be believed. There was also an understanding that the site would not be 'land banked' but that is exactly what has happened with the site and listed buildings being allowed to decay.
5. So L&Q are not listening to local MP's, local councillors nor the local residents and are forging ahead with profit as their main motive. Or, we wonder, do they now realise that they have paid too much for a site where change of use is quite clearly much more difficult than they believed/were led to believe, when they bought it and they are now in a damage limitation exercise to try and save face, at the expense of the local job market and the continued exclusion of the recreational facility that the residents of the borough and London as a whole demand! They are denying the community its sense of identity and feeling of community spirit, many hundreds of jobs and an inexpensive family night out.

6. On the subject of employment the losses are huge. The track's closure has not just meant the loss of the hundreds of jobs of people who worked at the track with scores of these hard working local people still not having found further employment. The knock on effect is huge, with taxi firms, food and beverage suppliers and other support services being hit hard by the closure, leading to further job losses.
7. L&Q are already wasting about £1m of partly taxpayers money each and every year that goes by refusing our offer to lease the site off them. They state that 'for a number of reasons lease arrangements are not sustainable' but do not advise what these reasons are. The fact is that they know that we will prove the site to be viable, scuppering further their slim planning opportunities. Furthermore, they have watched as the value of their investment has dropped from the 18m they paid for it little over a year ago to probably half that figure now. And this is YOUR money that they are wasting at an alarming rate.
8. Nick Budimir, spokesman for the investors who wish to buy the site, wants to buy it back off L&Q so that it can again be reinstated as a greyhound racing venue, but now to include other activities for the community, maybe 5 a side pitches in the track centre, a community centre for the elderly etc-a top notch leisure facility for the Borough to be proud of. This borough does not have a cinema and there is no reason why a cinema could not be included if we all work together. There is also the option that the far side of the track, which is not necessary for racing, is developed to provide some affordable housing in addition to the racing and leisure facilities.
9. We want the general public to stand with us and fight this. Future Council policy is currently being agreed and if enough people write in to the council demanding that the dog track remains as a leisure facility with lots of local employment then it will be virtually impossible for housing development to take place. We urge everybody to visit our website www.saveourstow.co.uk whereby you can download a simple letter to sign and send to Waltham Forest Council or you can write with your views directly to Site Specific Allocations DPD, Planning Policy, Environment and Regeneration, Sycamore House, Waltham Forest Town Hall Complex, Forest Road, Walthamstow, E17 4JF.

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NOTE –PLEASE ENSURE THAT ANY PRESS EXPOSURE CARRIES THE DETAILS IN POINT 9 ABOVE-THANK YOU