

14th March 2024

Dear Cabinet Members

Re: Report to cabinet titled: 'Uxbridge Golf Course and Haste Hill Golf Course – Open Space and Green Belt Notices'



While I understand the council's primary aim is solving the problem of these golf courses causing a loss, I also note the leasehold provides a financial windfall. I therefore urge the council to undertake minor tweaks to the report's recommendations relating to Uxbridge Golf Club to deliver environmental and social benefits for your residents. These are potentially 'quick wins'.

The Colne Valley Regional Park wrote to the council on 06/02/24 about this proposal. We have since been in email communication with the lead officer, and are reassured by the officers' responses to some of our substantive concerns about the future of the land in line with Green Belt policy (maintaining use as a golf course in perpetuity will achieve this, although so will managing the land for wildlife but we are not convinced that the opportunities of using biodiversity credits to fund this this have been properly explored).

If the Council decides to proceed along the golf course route, there are opportunities that can be taken for public benefit. In line with recommendation 4 *"..to make any further necessary decisions with regard to implementation of this project"*, we ask that the council directs officers to undertake the following three relatively small, but strategically important, amendments:

- 1. Footpath links:** I refer you to the map of proposed paths that meet a community need. We ask that the council either establishes rights of way/permissive paths in advance of the lease transfer or inserts clear and unambiguous clauses in the lease that direct the new owners to do this within a specified reasonable time period. I understand there are perceived health and safety concerns about the western proposed footpath; we feel that any such concerns can be easily mitigated and overcome. In any case, there are no such issues with regard to the eastern proposed path that has a clear public safety benefit in that it avoids residents walking along busy and dangerous Harvil Road. It is possible to incorporate the western path proposal through the wildlife buffer zone (see point 2, below) to minimise any perceived impact of the path on the golf course.
- 2. Buffer zone to the nature reserves:** The western part of Uxbridge Golf Course has been disused for approximately 10 years, it is extremely wet all of the time, this and the lower slopes would lend itself to being managed for nature. This area abuts Frays Valley Local Nature Reserve, Frays Farm Meadows SSSI and Harefield Place Nature Reserve. It acts as a buffer to this amazing wildlife area – part of which is nationally important. This edge of Frays Farm Meadows is where the key component of the SSSI resides (including brown sedge which was a real concern for Hillingdon and the Wildlife Trust when the HS2 access road was proposed in 2015). High nutrient inflow from the course slopes will enter the water table, which could be compounded by other management practices, e.g.

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President: Rt.Hon. the Lord Randall of Uxbridge Kt.PC.

herbicides, dumping cut vegetation by the ditches etc. Officers state the operation of this area as a commercial golf course will *“continue to be managed in line with the existing structure and operating practices.”* Though technically correct, it misses the point – this is an opportunity that could be seized by the council for the benefit of local residents while it has the chance. We ask the Council to establish a buffer to the nature reserves – ideally as an area set aside specifically for wildlife (and potentially using Biodiversity Credits to pay for this) or through use of specific clauses inserted into the lease about how the western part of the golf course must be managed for the benefit of wildlife. Failure to grasp this opportunity risks undermining the good ecological work the council is already undertaking elsewhere in the borough.

- 3. Use of proceeds from the land specifically linked to the 1938 Green Belt (London and home counties) Act:** The 1938 Act obliges the council to use proceeds to improve remaining Green Belt. The council’s Green Spaces team is looking at opportunities across the borough. We simply ask that the area of search is more tightly related to the Green Belt immediately next to Uxbridge Golf Course. This could include using proceeds to implement: a) points 1 and 2 (above), b) contributions to management and improvement of Hillingdon-owned land at Harefield Place Nature Reserve, Frays Valley LNR, Frays Farm Meadows SSSI and Denham Lock Wood SSSI, c) contribution to enhancement of the Colne Valley Trail within Hillingdon (U34,U75 and permissive paths) and connecting paths near the golf course (e.g. U50 and U56-58/D21)

Similar opportunities to points 1 and 2 apply to Haste Hill Golf Club, but as this is outside the Colne Valley Regional Park I will leave consideration of this to others. Note that point 3 does not apply to Haste Hill.

I urge you to take this time-limited window of opportunity to make these relatively small amendments that can achieve a win/win for council finances, the community and the environment. If no action is taken before the lease transfer, then this opportunity will be lost.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that the Colne Valley Regional Park stands ready to work in a positive manner with the council to agree details to realise these community benefits.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Stewart Pomeroy, Managing Agent
For, and on behalf of, the Colne Valley Regional Park Trust

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