

Dear Feryal Clark

Thank you for your email.

The Friends of Whitewebbs Park are familiar with the documents issued by Enfield Council and with the brochure produced by THFC/ENIC.

Despite your best intentions there was no consultation or engagement with stakeholders before the announcement of the preferred bidder. (as promised by Mark Bradbury)

You will understand that, given past experience, we have little faith in this Council's commitment to consultation. This email was received by stakeholders on 24th June.

Dear Stakeholder,

Further to my email of 8th June below I am writing to update you on the timetable for a decision whether to proceed with the highest scoring proposal for Whitewebbs.

The Council's Key Decision Forward plan has been updated to include the following entry :-

<http://governance.enfield.gov.uk/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=58808&PlanId=788&RPID=89859190>

This refers to 'A decision whether to proceed with the highest scoring bidder and enter into an agreement for lease conditional on planning consent' being made not before 20th July 2021. The decision report will be published 5 days before any decision is made.

If you wish to let me have any comments on behalf of your stakeholder group or organisation prior to then please do not hesitate to forward those to me.

Kind regards

Mark

Mark Bradbury MRICS, FRSA, FloEE (he/him)

As you will have seen the Council supplied the barest details of the competing bids and left THFC/ENIC to provide information about their bid.

The THFC/ENIC brochure contains very little hard detail of their bid. Essentially it is a bit of PR puff. Most of the pictures have no link to Whitewebbs. At least one is from NSW, Australia and another is from California. As a Parliamentarian you will know that what is left out of a statement is of equal or more significance to that which is included.

I have requested a copy of the THFC/ENIC bid so that we can make considered and informed comments but Mark Bradbury has not yet bothered to reply.

Stakeholders and the public are not in a position to comment effectively when little or no information is supplied.

Here are some observations on what has been revealed:

Public Access

THFC/ENIC is leasing the entire golf course area and all the land from and including the Beggars Hollow entrance to the North Lodge entrance to the East of the main path through the woodland. This includes the Lake, all car parks and the principal entrance points. The Toby Carvery is subject to a lease that expires in, I believe, 2094.

THFC/ENIC will control access to the park and most access points to the woodland, according to the published map.

The brochure speaks of “Upgrades to statutory footpaths and bridleways” There are no statutory footpaths in Whitewebbs Park only permissive ones. Only the North South sections of the bridleway are statutory. THFC/ENIC does propose to improve the East West bridleway section along the Northern section of its proposed playing area but this is probably more to do with site security (see below) than enhanced access.

The Council’s marketing criteria says:

“If a lease was agreed which included the woodland, this would only have been considered if the use was appropriate, enhanced public access, and ensured the maintenance of the woodland and public rights of way and bridleways.”

The proposed lease does not include the woodland. There is no requirement for THFC/ENIC to enhance footpaths in the woodland and they make no specific promise to do so.

Facilities

The Council document refers to “new café, toilets and other facilities”, THFC/ENIC refer only to café and toilets. There is no mention of facilities for the public. It does mention “opportunities for community and educational events and activities...” but no commitment or even a hint of supporting them. (This is the situation now). A new café, toilets and community facilities could be provided by finding an enterprising café owner / community group and arranging a 20 year lease. The free car park is a key feature to the success of such an enterprise. THFC/ENIC is not needed.

Investment in Biodiversity and restoring the landscape

THFC/ENIC are going to cover about 40 acres of the park with plastic reinforced turf and shift vast quantities of earth to form their pitches. We are talking hundreds of thousands of cubic metres. In exchange they will return parts of the golf course to historic landscape and wildflower meadows, informed by the original 19th Century parkland landscape. Pre golf course maps and the Dudley Stamp survey indicate that this was improved grazing land with trees such as Wellingtonia. The trees are still there, as is the grass. Currently, it looks like a 19th Century area of parkland apart from the bunkers and rapidly disappearing greens. The vistas are there unless there are plans to remodel the Enfield skyline. The trees are there in abundance, apart from ones that might be destroyed by the creation of pitches. There is little or nothing to do to meet this commitment.

Having destroyed 40 acres of grassland to make pitches the “Club will seek ecological enhancements around the new playing pitches.” This smacks of token gestures.

If the whole of the golf course is to be turned into wildflower meadows this would be a major task taking five years or more to effect and at some cost. The bulk of the land is improved grassland. Turning this into wildflower meadows is not simply a matter of failing to cut the grass. There are some areas which do have wildflowers growing in them. The THFC/ENIC document does not commit to turning all the land into wildflower meadows “informed by layout of the original 19th Century parkland landscape”.

There is reference to working “with Enfield Council and stakeholders to establish one of the Country’s first Habitat Banks to provide for the long term stewardship of Whitewebbs Wood”. This sounds good, habitat banks, seed banks..... The only references to Habitat Banks that I could find were schemes for helping Councils and developers offset environmental loss in one area with planting in another. We need a very clear explanation of “Habitat Banks”.

Open Space vs privacy

I can find no guarantee that the golf course area will be open to the public (remember there are no statutory rights of way in that area). The THFC brochure refers only to “...Whitewebbs Wood which will remain unchanged and open to the public”.

THFC/ENIC is very protective of its privacy – see the security precautions at the training ground gate, the 3 metre high earth banks and high fences that surround the property. We can expect similar measures in Whitewebbs.

There is a legitimate question to ask which is “why does THFC/ENIC want to lease the whole of the golf course and beyond?” There have been suggestions that it is part of their privacy protection measures or that future expansion is planned. Others have suggested that the plan is to buy up the lease for the Toby Carvery (ENIC has a financial interest in the Carvery’s holding company I believe) and turn it into a hotel for visiting teams and officials. The surrounding gardens, even the lake, would become part of the hotel’s private grounds. Ownership of the whole area will enable THFC/ENIC to control access to the park, the car parking and to a considerable extent, the woodland.

The community

Through the Council the people of Enfield own the park. The Council are the custodians working on our behalf, not property magnates.

These statements appear in the marketing material:

The council's aim of leasing Whitewebbs Park Golf Course is for the park to be rejuvenated and to be used in a way that benefits the wider local community.

A more inclusive range of activities - the acceptable proposed use must be outdoor leisure or sport led. Proposals with no element of outdoor leisure use will not be considered.

It is clear from the above that there is no real provision for the park’s “rejuvenation”.

There is certainly no provision or funding for “A more inclusive range of activities”

We have lost about 85,000 hours of sporting activity on a golf course open to all ages, genders, abilities and income and replaced it with a facility that is aimed at a very narrow section of the population serving the interests of a multi billion pound company ultimately owned and registered in a tax haven.

The commitments to access for walkers and other park users are minimal at best. THFC/ENIC gain full rights over a very section of the park with the potential to extend their activities throughout it.

Women's football is taking off commercially. This scheme from THFC/ENIC is not born of altruism , it is a straight commercial investment that is in their best interests. This is what multi billion companies do.

Employment and Training.

Surely the main training ground required trained turf and horticultural workers – has this work all been done by unskilled and untrained people – I think not. This has the feel of PR spin.

The Spurs brochure changes the terminology. According to their brochure, Spurs will 'facilitate' the creation of the Sports Turf Academy. What are they actually promising?

What do we, the owners of the park get?

A slightly better café and toilets.

This deal offers nothing to the park, the environment, the climate emergency or biodiversity. The Council might get some money but in the process it will undermine its environmental credentials and destroy the trust of a large share of the electorate.

For your information I attach a copy of our latest newsletter.

We would urge you to review the documents again and consider the glaring omissions contained therein.

Yours sincerely