

FEATURE

Pastures sports hall saved from housing development

Though a campaigning community group say much work has yet to be done

by Elizabeth Atkin

The Pastures Youth and Sports Centre on Davies Lane, Leytonstone will not be redeveloped into housing – following the launch of a local campaign to save the site.

A community group entitled Save Our Pastures – whose neon green and orange posters are visible all around Waltham Forest – aim to protect the sports centre, the neighbouring Good Shepherd Building and its surrounding grounds.

The group cites an independent report from Sports England about a shortfall of sports halls in the borough – as well as the East London area’s “rich ecology” of trees and wildlife – as two of many reasons it should be revitalised and invested in as a resource for the community, as opposed to being redeveloped into housing.

At the time of writing, 1,315 people had signed a change.org petition supporting the cause to save the site.

And the campaign was tentatively bolstered by news that a proposal from Waltham Forest Council-owned housing developer Sixty Bricks was withdrawn by in March 2021, subject to formal confirmation.

Leytonstone Ward Councillor Clyde Loakes said the “unique nature” of the Pastures site, as well as “the future and existing community provision” provided there made it untenable for the proposed housing development to go ahead.

Of the decision to withdraw, he said: “Following feasibility reviews and discussions with council officers and councillors from both Leytonstone and Cann Hall Wards it has become clear that the unique nature of the site and the

complexity of working on the site, as well as the existing and future community provision delivered there, makes it unviable for Sixty Bricks to take forward at this time.

“Consequently all proposals to date are being withdrawn, subject to confirmatory processes which will take a few weeks to complete.”

And while Save Our Pastures welcomed the withdrawal of this specific proposal – it made clear much work is yet to be done to restore the Pastures to its former glory. In a statement, the group told the *Echo*: “Save Our Pastures is pleased to learn from local Cllr Clyde Loakes that it is unviable to take the proposed redevelopment forward.

“The current proposals have been withdrawn, subject to formal confirmation. The shared vision that we will create with local businesses, organisations, residents and current and future site users will embrace the creative sector, community services, culture, education, sport, youth engagement, and business and employment support. It will be underpinned by a comprehensive and robust business plan.

“This work will be undertaken within the context of recovery from the pandemic emergency, planned population growth in the south of the borough and Waltham Forest Council’s Public Service Strategy priorities – designed to encourage safe and healthy lives, promote the concept of ‘15-minute neighbourhoods’ and build confidence in our future.

“Save Our Pastures will continue to oppose any inappropriate redevelopment and looks forward to formulating plans for the site that will enhance the area and support the aspirations of the community in Leytonstone and throughout Waltham Forest.”

To read more about the campaign: [visit saveourpastures.org](http://www.saveourpastures.org)



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COMMENT



Walthamstow Market Credit Alice Strutt

A challenging year for Walthamstow Market, the heart of the community

Gunvor Jónsson and Sophie Watson from The Open University’s Department of Sociology reveal findings from their year-long study of the market

It’s best known as Europe’s longest street market to outsiders, but for many locals, Walthamstow Market is considered the heart of the community. As the pandemic has taken its toll, however, this heart appears to have slowed, if not gradually stopped beating.

The UK government largely ignored markets in their business support plans over the last year. As the Covid-19 crisis unfolded in 2020, footfall at Walthamstow Market gradually reduced, as customers became increasingly reluctant to leave their homes, turning instead to online shopping.

So why have the traders at Walthamstow Market not simply responded by converting their businesses into online enterprises? Some traders have indeed initiated ‘click and collect’ services, as well as online ordering and

home deliveries. However, most of the people we have talked to resisted converting their enterprises into full-blown online businesses. There are many possible explanations for this, but in this commentary we want to highlight one important reason: the social significance of Walthamstow Market.

We are drawing on research carried out over the past year, for which we have conducted interviews with traders at Walthamstow Market as part of a project called ‘Moving Market Places’, led by The Open University.

Our research confirms findings of existing studies which highlight the important social role of markets in the UK – they often serve marginalised populations, offering low-cost and good quality products, as well as providing a space for social interaction, which helps

banter’ are vital, worthwhile aspects of being a market trader in Walthamstow.

We also found that trading at the market helps people develop important business and communication skills, which in turn

been well-recognised by Waltham Forest Council and market managers. Policies have been introduced to support traders through the crisis, such as relief from rental payments during their months of inactiv-

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can help them grow their enterprise further, with some traders branching out into wholesale trade and shops. Traders learn such skills informally from each other and from their customers. The everyday, casual interactions that take place between people at Walthamstow Market are therefore not just fringe-benefits, but in fact important tools for growth.

Fortunately in Walthamstow, the value of the market has

ity. Market managers say they have been contacted by 30-40 people wanting to set up a stall during the pandemic, but at this stage licences cannot be issued until there are clearer guidelines regarding reopening.

With all this enthusiasm for supporting and enhancing the market, we do not doubt that it will continue to exist as a vibrant and significant part of Walthamstow’s diverse economic, social and cultural life.



Walthamstow Market Credit Penny Dampier