

## Friends of Udney Park Playing Fields

Newsletter 39 June 9<sup>th</sup> 2018

### A huge "Thank you" and what happens next

First of all a massive thank you everyone that Objected to the Planning Application. The response from our Community was extraordinary, 5 times the level of opposition than other controversial schemes in the Borough.

Our campaign was boosted by key local sporting figures, Sir Mo Farah, Bill Sweeney, Paul Sinton-Hewitt and now we are delighted that another high profile sportsman connected to Udney Park has offered their support, JPR Williams was probably the most famous St Mary's Medicals RFC alumni ever to grace Udney Park and recently committed to the cause.

We expect the Planning Application to be heard soon though as yet the date is TBC. Given all 3 political parties on the Council committed in their manifesto's to enforce Policy and maintain a zero development stance on Udney Park, consistent with all relevant Policy, we expect the Application to be rejected. Quantum then have to decide whether to Appeal to the Planning Inspector for that specific Application, bring back to the Council with a smaller scheme or sell up and apply their "entrepreneurial cunning" in more suitable locations.



### **Mixed news in the Local Plan**

Many people in Property do not understand why Quantum are trying to build on a London playing field which relies on smashing Policy, when their other sites are “brown-field” on the South coast. Certainly Quantum are NOT as they portray “friends of the community”, they have spent hundreds of thousands firstly avoiding an Environmental Impact Assessment and then arguing that Udney Park should be a Development Site in the Local Plan. The final Local Plan has now been fully approved, the great news is that LBRUT have sufficient Development Sites for new housing and Udney Park remains protected. However, the Inspector ruled that LBRUT did not have an adequate process to assess any Local Green Space Applications and so removed LGS status from Udney Park, a disappointing outcome that Quantum spent a great deal of professional fees to achieve. Thankfully the Inspector endorsed the LBRUT Plan overall, including the Playing Pitch Strategy and maintained OOLTI status on Udney Park despite the “big bucks” of Quantum. However, the loss of LGS and the tactics of Quantum show we must redouble our efforts to beat them.

### **Sport England says “no” - again**

It is massively encouraging that many relevant NGOs are against any development on Udney Park, sporting organisations and ecology charities are united against building on a protected Playing Field. However, one NGO, Sport England, is a statutory consultee now on all Planning Applications for building on playing fields, too many fields were lost in less enlightened times when developers could get away with putting their profits above community need.

Sport England Objected to the Planning Application in April and Quantum came back with a substantial response to try and gain Support. As Application was contradictory Quantum clarified that the CIC will apply for charitable grants to fund facilities above £1.7m and will only pay if the CIC fail to get grants after around 3 years. If the CIC fails – and why would grant-giving charitable bodies donate to a developer’s scheme - how could the CIC enforce payment by Quantum in 3 years? Quantum may have already sold by then and how could the CIC afford to fight Quantum in Court. Quantum also threw in 2 cricket nets to overcome their “cricket is dying” justification for removing all cricket pitches, they forgot to mention there are 2 cricket nets already at Udney Park. Thankfully, Sport England and Governing Bodies maintained a strong Objection with a new submission to the Planning Officer on May 21<sup>st</sup>.

*“Sport England therefore upholds its **objection** to the above application as it is not considered to meet our adopted playing fields policy or NPPF Para. 74 for the following reasons; the proposal will result in a significant quantitative loss of playing field on a site identified in the Council’s PPS as a Strategic (High Priority) site. It is acknowledged that the applicant will provide new facilities for sport on the site (i.e. enabling development) but this is not sufficient to overcome the quantitative loss of playing field from the site”.*

### **Quantum/CIC breach data and governance rules**

Quantum and their partners TCSG CIC have been desperately trying influence the outcome of their Planning Application in a manner, which has been ruled “not appropriate” by the Council. Quantum/CIC dumped copies of their pro-forma support forms to each Councillor with a provocative covering letter, to which the Council’s Governance team responded: *“This is lobbying by the developer which is not really appropriate. It is particularly important that Members of the Planning Committee are able to say at a meeting that they have not formed, a view, will listen to all the arguments over the application, and will therefore make their judgment based on the merits of the application”*

Quantum/CIC try to make developing Udney Park a party-political issue, claiming that (the Conservative administration) *“chose to listen to a minority of people who, in our opinion may not have been honest with them, and who subsequently ran a campaign that was factually incorrect and misleading”*. We challenge Quantum/CIC to provide chapter & verse to justify this blatantly false statement made to the Council. On the contrary, many “assertions” by Quantum have been challenged by independent experts, for example: their Ecology Report has been demolished by specialists and the Sports Governing Bodies are clear that Udney Park was used by community clubs when ICL owned it, despite Quantum repeatedly stating in the Local Plan consultation that Udney Park was *“not publicly accessible and therefore a void in terms of recreational opportunities”*, in blatant denial that Udney Park has been since 1919 a playing field.

### **The data behind the Quantum/CIC “support”**

The level of individual objections to the Quantum/CIC Application is unprecedented in recent history in the Borough. Those that stand to gain from the Application relied on generic support letters from pressuring names on their respective databases, at pitch-side and in the GP surgery waiting room.

We have analysed the “support” for the Quantum Planning Application to see which of the vested interest groups provided the most pro-forma submissions.

60% of the support was from the GP practice, whose patients said “yes” to a new surgery for a site that patients had expressed an almost 4:1 preference against.

29% of the support was from members of clubs that share a Director with the CIC and who expect to have priority access to any recreational facility left in return for providing “camouflage for a grubby land deal”.

8% of objections were personally submitted.

7% were from London Scottish members, a club that confessed they were offered a £4k gift by Quantum and who distanced themselves from the scheme.

**Transparency of Trust funds**

Many people donated to the Udney Park Playing Fields Trust and their Board has asked us to explain what funds have been spent on the campaign so far. The full documents are available on LBRUT Planning Portal and are on the Friends website.

2 reports were commissioned by the Trust, a full Objection of the overall Planning Application by a leading London-based Planning Consultant, Jonathan Drew, and a Traffic and Parking Report by Odyssey Consultants. These reports cost a total of £7700.