

Letter to Ealing council about concerns over Warren Farm and the Green Quarter

Key information

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Concerns over Warren Farm and the Green Quarter

Dear Councillor Peter Mason,

Concerns over Warren Farm and the Green Quarter

I am writing to you with concerns about the proposed development at Warren Farm, and the existing Green Quarter development.

As a London-wide member of the London Assembly, I was elected to both hold the Mayor to account and investigate issues that matter to Londoners. Following conversations with constituents, I have become deeply concerned about certain issues relating to Warren Farm and the Green Quarter. I have cc'd this letter to the Mayor of London as I believe many of the issues that I'm hearing from residents will also concern him.

I have visited the Warren Farm Nature Reserve group a couple of times and recently met with Clean Air in Southall and Hayes (CASH). Although these are two separate sites, both sets of campaigners share concerns about the transparency and accountability of Ealing Council. I'm sure you'll agree there can be no environmental justice without social justice, and these fundamental concerns are recurring themes among individuals and communities I have spoken to in Ealing. I hope your response to this letter will help remedy these concerns in relation to these two developments.

Warren Farm

As you know, Warren Farm is a rewilded 61 acre urban meadow and home to many common, rare and endangered species – such as Skylarks and Barn Owls. The threat posed to Warren Farm from this development appears out of the step with the Mayor, who has accepted recommendations of the London Rewilding Taskforce and pledged to do his utmost to protect nature in the capital.

Sport is essential to the health and well-being of Londoners, and I absolutely support the right of people to have safe and accessible spaces to participate in sport. However, responses to the council's public consultation makes it clear that many Ealing residents would be very interested in new or upgraded sports centres where there are existing facilities, and the petition of over 23,000 signatures shows the huge public opposition to Warren Farm being destroyed for the proposed purposes.

Campaigners and ecologists have labelled the council's proposals at the farm to essentially be 'de-wilding'. We cannot and must not destroy nature and risk rendering species extinct amid a climate and ecological emergency.

In light of this extensive opposition from campaigners and residents, I hope you can respond to the following specific points of concern:

1. In a response to me (@ZackPolanski) on X (previously Twitter) on 27th July - you posted a picture of what you describe as "dilapidation and hard standing." My understanding is that is a tiny fraction of what you intend to build on and de-wild. Is this a commitment that none of the rewilded space will be taken by your proposed sports facility? And if that is not the intention, how much are you planning to take? You have publicly stated that over 60% of Warren Farm will be given Local Nature Reserve designation but that this percentage includes adding on the Imperial College land. Under your published plans, over 50% of rewilded Warren Farm would be de-wilded. And, that this percentage does not include the buffer zones vulnerable wildlife would need from introducing intensely mown pitches, astroturf, floodlights and car parking.
2. I understand that the council's plans identified several brownfield sites where sports facilities could be built, or enhancing sports pitches that already exist with better transport links closer to Southall. Why have you rejected the idea of giving rewilded meadow Warren Farm Local Nature Reserve designation in its entirety, (as recommended by environmental experts on the basis of official species records), rewilding the hard-standing at Warren Farm and building facilities on those other sites instead as stated in the councils Sports Strategy?
3. Baroness Jenny Jones in the House of Lords tweeted on July 24th that the Warren Farm site is a potential stadium for Southall FC. The owner and chairman of that club is the son of the incumbent MP Virenda Sharma. Can you confirm whether discussions have taken place regarding Southall FC's use of the site?
4. Can you confirm that Imperial College London are not involved in the council's proposed plans to build sports facilities on Warren Farm and that their involvement is purely to rewild their privately owned adjacent land that they have leased to the council?

The Green Quarter

I have had many conversations with the London Mayor about the importance of clean air. I'm sure, should he visit the Green Quarter, the Mayor would be as horrified as I was about the stench of petrol at the site, which left both myself and my colleague with a headache for several hours after our visit. I spoke to residents there who explained that they were being offered to move out (one had chosen to move from Ealing to Slough), but they also were afraid to go on the record because of the aggressive way the council was dealing with their complaints.

1. Having met with campaigners of CASH, they are primarily concerned about the lack of engagement by the council. Will you commit to meeting with them at the site, so they can give you tour of the site and explain their concerns?
2. You wrote to CASH on 12th July 2021 and said, “the council will not take any further sponsorship from Berkeley Group.” Can you explain how they managed to be named a sponsor of Pride, before that sponsorship was later retracted? (Berkley goes by several aliases, including “Berkeley Homes”, “Berkeley”, “Berkeley Foundation”, ”St James”, ”St William”, ”St George”, ”Southall Waterside”, ”The Green Quarter” and “Jags Sanghera”)
3. CASH are currently working with Imperial College on biomonitoring research in Southall and examining the health data of the communities living close to contaminated brownfield sites. How do you intend to engage with this research when it is published?

Thank you for taking the time to respond to these questions of residents and mine.

Kind regards,

Zack Polanski AM

Green Party Member of the London Assembly

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