

**Report for:**  
**ACTION/INFORMATION\*** (delete as appropriate)

**Item Number:**

<b>Contains Confidential or Exempt Information</b>	<b>YES (Confidential Appendix)</b>
<b>Title</b>	The Future of Warren Farm Sports Ground
<b>Responsible Officer(s)</b>	Peter George, Strategic Director for Economy and Sustainability
<b>Author(s)</b>	Chris Bunting, Assistant Director for Leisure
<b>Portfolio(s)</b>	Cllr Deirdre Costigan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Action Cllr Polly Knewstub, Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities
<b>For Consideration By</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date to be Considered</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
<b>Implementation Date if Not Called In</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
<b>Affected Wards</b>	Norwood Green
<b>Keywords/Index</b>	Warren Farm Sports Ground, Local Nature Reserve, Imperial College

**Purpose of Report:**

The purpose of the report is to transform the land at Warren Farm Sports Ground into the largest rewilding scheme in London which will make a significant contribution towards achieving a strategic objective of the Council to rewild over 800,000sqm of land across the Borough which is a key component of the Council's Climate Action strategy.

In recognition of the value of the existing biodiversity at Warren Farm Sports Ground, every effort has been made to retain the entirety of the existing green space at Warren Farm for the purpose of nature, rewilding and biodiversity which moves forward from the previous proposals presented to Cabinet in January 2023.

The revised proposal that will enable the protection and enhancement of nature at Warren Farm Sports Ground has been generated through negotiations with Imperial College London and Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust ("Imperial") to develop exciting options to incorporate the provision of the majority of community sports facilities on what is currently their land as per the indicative site plan on page five, subject to completion of ecology and habitat surveys.

The report also seeks the authority to complete a property transaction with "Imperial" to facilitate the delivery of sports facilities for the local community.

## **1. Recommendations for DECISION**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Agrees that the entirety of the existing green space at Warren Farm Sports Ground (in red on page 4) is retained and enhanced for the purposes of nature, rewilding and biodiversity.
2. Delegates authority to the Strategic Director of Economy and Sustainability to apply to Natural England with updated plans to designate the entirety of the Warren Farm Sports Ground (in red) as a Local Nature Reserve in accordance with sections 19 and 21 of the National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949 (as amended) in collaboration with local user groups to safeguard the land for future generations.
3. Delegates authority to the Strategic Director of Economy and Sustainability, following consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, to agree terms of either a) a land swap which would involve the sale of the Council's land and the purchase of the land marked in blue on the plan on page 4 which is owned by Imperial College London and Imperial College Healthcare NHS (Imperial's Land) or b) to acquire Imperial's Land (without a sale of Council land) and to enter into any legal documents necessary to facilitate the agreed option and in the event that either option requires a capital budget, delegates authority to the Strategic Director, Resources following consultation with the Cabinet member for the Inclusive Economy, to approve the capital budget and financing.
4. Delegates authority to the Strategic Director of Economy and Sustainability to determine the final boundaries of the parcels of land to be swapped, acquired or leased (within the blue area of the plan on page 4), and to agree any balancing payment if required.
5. Delegates authority to the Strategic Director of Economy and Sustainability to determine the exact location of the sports facilities (within the blue area of the plan on page 4) following consultation with local interest groups.

## **2. Recommendations for NOTING**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet note that there has been no change to the strategic need for community sports facilities arising from the Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facility Strategy 2022-2031.

## **3. Reason for Decision and Options Considered**

- 3.1 Climate Action is one of the three cross cutting strategic objectives set out in the Council Plan. The Council is taking significant steps to fulfil our Climate Action strategic objectives for the borough by planting 50,000 new trees and pursuing 25% Borough wide tree canopy cover, delivering 10 new parks, enhancing

biodiversity, making progress towards rewilding 800,000sqm of land, and retrofitting homes, all towards achieving our strategic target of achieving a net zero Borough by 2030.

3.2 The Council has already taken decisive action by announcing plans in 2023 to create the Ealing Regional Park which will be central to the Council's climate resilience strategy going forward.

3.3 Warren Farm has a strategically important role to play as part of the Council's Climate Action strategy through the restoration of natural habitats, increasing biodiversity and providing space for nature to re-establish itself.

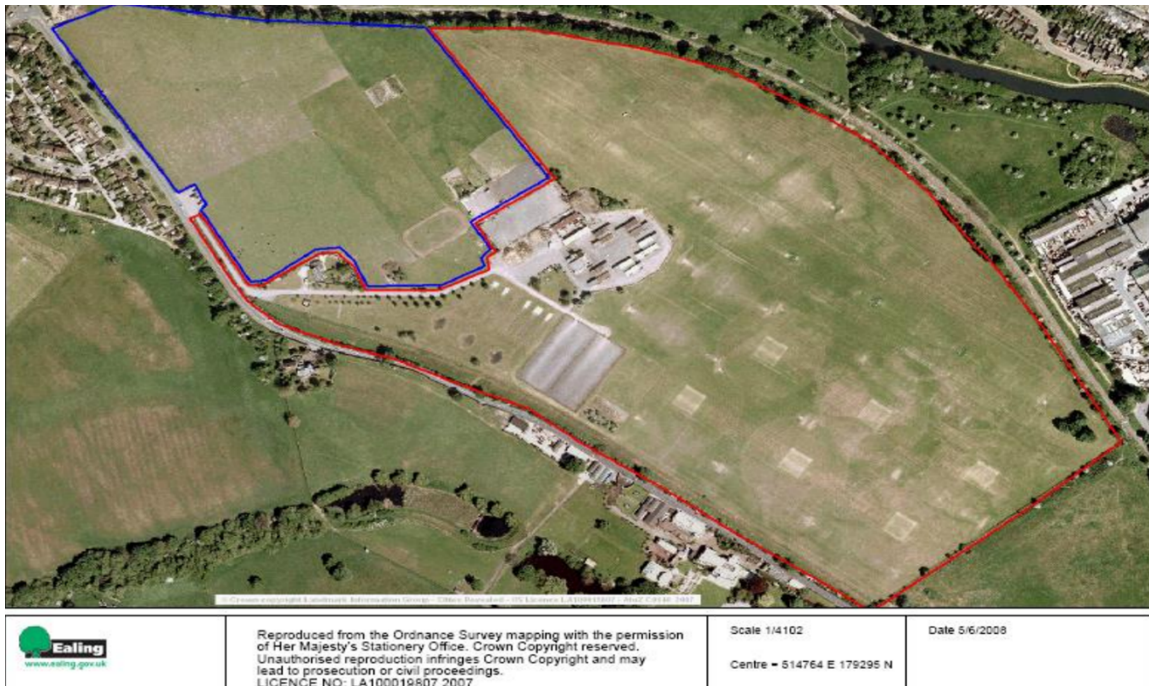
3.4 The last report on Warren Farm Sports Ground that went to Cabinet in January 2023 anticipated that our nature and biodiversity aspirations could be met within the green striped land in the plan below (which includes council and Imperial land) whilst sports facilities could be accommodated on the balance of the council-owned land.



3.5 Since that report went to Cabinet the Council has spent considerable time reviewing the plans for Warren Farm Sports Ground within the context of our wider plans to move towards net zero and improving the climate resilience of the Borough.

3.6 From a climate action and climate resilience perspective our ambition has always been to safeguard as much of the existing green space at the former Warren Farm Sports Ground (within the red line on the plan beneath) as possible in order to enhance it for nature, rewilding and biodiversity. The negotiations we have undertaken with Imperial mean that there is an opportunity to retain almost the entirety of the existing Warren Farm Sports Ground for nature and rewilding,

equating to over 90% of the site; a significant increase from the previous proposal. Furthermore, the Council is convinced that this approach will best achieve our ambitions to create the largest rewilding scheme in London at Warren Farm Sports Ground.



3.7 Warren Farm Sports Ground has the potential to become the best rewilding scheme nationwide. We want this land to become a Nature Reserve that will not only be a fabulous resource for communities today but one that can be enjoyed in perpetuity by future generations too. The report therefore recommends that we formally notify Natural England of the revised map of our intention to create a Nature Reserve at the Warren Farm Sports Ground and at the same time formally end the previous proposal in the last Cabinet report to seek Nature Reserve status for an alternative land configuration.

3.8 As set out in 4.10 of the January 2023 Cabinet report, the Council has is in the process of undertaking a a phase 1 ecological surveys on the Warren Farm Sports Ground. The initial results have identified that the optimum approach to protecting land for the local wildlife and enhancing biodiversity was for the Warren Farm Sports Ground (in red) to be enhanced for wildlife and biodiversity. This work, subject to final recommendations, therefore supports the Council's decision to enhance and protect all of the Warren Farm Sports Ground for nature and biodiversity.

3.9 Over the last twelve months the Council has proactively and positively engaged with the local community and interested groups to understand how they would like the land at Warren Farm to be used. The views expressed by the community

supported the conclusions of the Council that the Warren Farm Sports Ground should be enhanced for wildlife and biodiversity.

- 3.10 The Council has been engaged in a long and constructive negotiation with Imperial over the Council's preference to retain and enhance the entirety of the Warren Farm Sports Ground for nature and biodiversity. The Council is pleased that the organisations support the Council's vision for Warren Farm Sports Ground and that they are supportive of the Council's proposals to retain and enhance that land for nature.
- 3.11 The Council has now reached agreement with Imperial, subject to completion of surveys and contractual terms, that, in order to compensate for the loss of sports facilities originally envisaged to be delivered on part of the Warren Farm Sports Ground, that Imperial will work with the Council to facilitate sports facilities within the land currently held by Imperial whilst also improving biodiversity on the site which is currently used for equestrian use. The Council is clear that this outcome best balances the imperative needs of nature with local needs for new sports facilities.
- 3.12 The Council now hopes that all key stakeholders are on board and supportive of our vision to protect and enhance Warren Farm Sports Ground for nature whilst utilising the adjacent land for sports facilities.
- 3.13 The provision of sports facilities within the land adjacent to Warren Farm Sports Ground remains a strategic priority to meet the needs of the local community of Southall. The previous report provides the Council with the authority to carry out a marketing exercise to identify a preferred partner to develop and operate sports facilities. This report is therefore updating Cabinet that following the recommendation in this report to allocate the land in blue for sports facilities that the Council will shortly commence the marketing exercise prior to bringing a report back to Cabinet recommending the appointment of a development partner / operator.
- 3.14 The Plan below shows how the new sports facilities could be configured within the blue land. This indicative masterplan assumes the following mix of uses but the exact provision of sporting facilities will be resolved during the appointment of a partner process. The Council will want to continue our positive engagement with community interest groups to ensure that the new sports facilities both meets the needs of the local community whilst also avoiding any harm to what will become the Warren Farm nature reserve.

Masterplan contains:

- 4 2 no. 3G Pitches
- 5 3 no. Community Cricket Pitches with 50 yard boundary
- 6 3 no. 11v11 Football Pitches
- 7 3 no. 9v9 Junior Football Pitches
- 8 Clubhouse with 6 changing rooms, kitchen and social space



#### 4. Key Implications

4.1 Any development at Warren Farm Sports Ground must be informed by the strategic priorities and policy objectives of relevant national, regional and local organisations. The long-term sustainability and success will depend to a large extent on the ability to deliver outcomes across a wide range of agendas. The recommendations within this reports strikes the right balance between protecting and enhancing nature and biodiversity whilst also meeting the sporting and health needs of the local community.

#### 5. Financial

5.1 The report delegates authority to the Strategic Director of Economy and Sustainability to agree terms to acquire the land owned by Imperial to facilitate the development of sports facilities on that land. As set out in the January report, this was intended to be by way of a land swap and negotiations are ongoing with Imperial as to final nature of the land transaction (by way of swap/ exchange, lease, or purchase). The confidential appendix sets out the Council's valuer's current valuation of the land, however, until negotiations are concluded on the nature of the transaction the financial implications will not be clear.

5.2 The funding and business case for the development and management and maintenance of sports facilities has not yet been completed and will be informed by the marketing exercise with potential partners/ operators. Any operating surplus,

would be expected to fund the revenue implications (minimum revenue provision and interest costs) of any borrowing to finance the capital costs of site acquisition. Should these be insufficient, then alternative funding sources should be sought such as grant funding, or capital receipts to avoid the revenue costs of borrowing causing pressure on the council's revenue budgets.

5.3 As a result, the terms of the land transaction will need to include appropriate conditions precedent in relation to the Council (or its partner) achieving Planning consent for the sporting facilities and, following marketing, that a viable business case for the facilities can be made.

5.4 As there are no existing capital programme budgets for this land transaction and the financial implications cannot be confirmed until negotiations are concluded, the recommendations delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Resources to agree any necessary capital budget and financing, in consultation with the Cabinet member for Inclusive Economy. If a capital budget is required, this is not expected to be in excess of the valuation in the confidential appendix.

5.5 Other costs associated with the recommendations in this report and legal and valuation costs associated with the land swap or acquisition will be allocated from service budgets.

## **6. Legal**

The Council is required by S123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to ensure that it disposes of its land for the best consideration reasonably obtainable. If the disposal of the Council owned land proceeds, officers will ensure that the Council receives best consideration by undertaking valuations of the Council's land and the land it will acquire if there is a swap.

## **7. Value For Money**

If successful, this scheme will result in a brand new sports facility with new changing and training facilities that will be accessible and affordable to the community.

## **8. Sustainability Impact Appraisal**

Principles of sustainability will be incorporated throughout the planning of all works on the site to ensure options for alternative/'greener' materials and products, quality and economical and sustainable utilities systems are used.

## **9. Risk Management**

A risk register will be developed for the scheme. This register will be reviewed regularly at the project meetings.

## **10. Community Safety**

Providing a newly refurbished sporting facility and Local Nature Reserve will help in encouraging participation in sport, health, well-being and an appreciation of nature.

## **11. Links to the 3 Key Priorities for the Borough**

The council's administration has three key priorities for Ealing. They are:

- fighting inequality
- tackling the climate crisis
- creating good jobs.

## **12. Equalities, Human Rights and Community Cohesion**

The Borough population is projected to grow by over 38,000 to 398,000 by 2031 with an expected increase in demand for access to sports facilities identified in the Council's Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facility Strategy 2022-2031 the Council will need to ensure that the sporting facility needs of local residents can be met alongside the desire to accommodate accessible and high-quality open space on site for nature and biodiversity to continue to thrive. With the additional significant benefit of including the land immediately to the northwest of Warren Farm Sports Ground this is a project that can deliver across a range of Council priorities and it is therefore anticipated that all residents of the Borough will potentially benefit from the project.

## **13. Staffing/Workforce and Accommodation implications**

There are no workforce or accommodation implications.

## **14. Property and Assets**

Buildings within the site are currently derelict.

## **15. Any other implications:**

There are no other implications.

## **16. Consultation**

Public Consultation

The Warren Farm Sports Ground consultation was carried out between 24 March and 20 May 2022. A short online survey was launched using the GiveMyView platform, consisting of a series of open-ended questions inviting feedback on how the area is currently being used by residents and what preferences they have about its future. A total of 1,520 responses were received, representing a strong community response to the consultation. 45% of respondents were from Hanwell, 30% from Ealing town, 16% from Southall and less than 4% from each of the other towns. This means a slight over-representation of responses from Ealing and an under-representation from Southall, given Warren Farm Sports Ground's location.

## **17. Appendices**

Appendix (Confidential)

## **18. Background Information**

- The Future of Warren Farm Sports Ground Cabinet Report 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023



- The Future of Warren Farm Sports Ground Overview and Scrutiny Report  
March 2023

## Consultation

Name of consultee	Post held	Date sent to consultee	Date response received	Comments appear in paragraph:
<b>Internal</b>				
Cllr Peter Mason	Leader		22/02/2024	Throughout
Cllr Deirdre Costigan	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Action		22/02/2024	Throughout
Cllr Polly Knewstubb	Member for Thriving Communities		22/02/2024	Throughout
Peter George	Strategic Director, Economy & Sustainability		22/02/2024	Throughout
Alice Rowland	Head of Legal Services Commercial		22/02/2024	Throughout
Emily Hill	Strategic Director, Resources		22/02/2024	5. Financial
Helen Harris	Director of Legal Services		22/02/2024	6. Legal
Yalini Gunarajah	Finance Manager - Place		22/02/2024	5. Financial
Adam Whalley	Assistant Director, Capital Investment Programme		22/02/2024	Throughout
Julia Robertson	Sports Development Manager		22/02/2024	Throughout

## Report History

<b>Decision type:</b>	<b>Urgency item? No</b>
<b>EITHER:</b> Key decision <b>OR</b> Non-key decision <b>OR</b> For information (delete as applicable)	<b>Key Decision</b>
Report no.:	Report author and contact for queries:
	Chris Bunting, Assistant Director, Leisure <a href="mailto:buntingc@ealing.gov.uk">buntingc@ealing.gov.uk</a>