

Hands off our land!

BY NIGEL PIVARO

HYDE'S three Conservative Councillors have joined a row over the proposed sale of land at Matley Lane known as the Waldorf Fields.

Tameside's Tory Leader John Bell, along with colleagues Derek Baines and Ruth Welsh have written to Tameside's Borough Solicitor objecting to the sale of the land stating 'On the basis that the land in question was left to the people of Newton and Hyde by Covenant.'

By putting their weight behind the campaign to keep the land for the recreational use of all Tameside's residents, further pressure is put on the council.

The Council could have to reconsider the sale of the land to Dukinfield Golf Club.

The club want to use the land to extend their course away from housing.

In the past the club has received complaints about stray golf balls and has been forced to pay out multiple insurance claims from passing motorists and householders.

The club has offered an exchange of 2.63 acres of their own land to be given to the council.

The piece of land is situated next to a three acre parcel of the Waldorf Field that the club do not need for their course.

However, this deal, while it would create a large attractive parcel of land close to Matley Lane, would still leave a net loss of land to the community of three acres.

The club is at pains to stress that no public rights of way would be lost, but this has not appeased the Save the Waldorf Fields Group.

They state the land was left to the Council by Newton Mills for the sole use of the community as a recreation ground for the residents of Hyde.

They argue this creates a moral imperative that the land is not within the gift of the council to sell.

The closing date for objections to the sale was May 29 and the final decision of whether to go through with the sale lies with Cabinet Deputy for Economic Services Kieran Quinn.

In a statement Tameside Council said: "The golf club has approached the Council to acquire land to facilitate improvements to their existing facilities. This has involved numerous discussions, which have been ongoing for some time and have included for the continued provision of open space for the use of the general public."

"The Council's land, known as Waldorf Playing Fields, is subject to a covenant restricting its use to a recreation ground.

"The Council has been in contact with the agents acting for the beneficiary of the covenant with a view to them releasing the covenant on part of the site.

"The consultation period for any comments or objections closed on May 29. Any comments or objections received will be included in a report which will go to the cabinet deputy for consideration, in this case Cllr Kieran Quinn, who will subsequently make the final decision over whether the land is sold."

Questions to the panel about the sale at Monday's Hyde District

Assembly meeting were deflected by Councillor John Sullivan who said: "If it relates to planning issues we will have to pass any questions onto planning."

However Cllr John Bell said: "Forget planning issues, it is about whether the council has the right to sell land left by Waldorf Mill to the people of Newton and Hyde.

"I understand there is a strong movement against the sale and I suggest that you should employ a solicitor with expertise in this area of conveyance.

"I personally feel strongly that the land should be kept as open space for the people of Hyde to enjoy in the spirit that it was given."

Following that remark the audience, with many from the Save Waldorf Fields Group, erupted into applause.

Cllr Helen Bowden told the group that she and Cllr Peter Robinson will attend a meeting with Councillor Quinn to discuss the proposed sale and its implications in the near future.