

Boris Johnson approves Walthamstow dog track plan

Mayor of London Boris Johnson has given his approval to a controversial scheme to redevelop Walthamstow dog track in east London.

Waltham Forest Council approved a plan in May to build 294 homes and a leisure complex at the Grade II listed stadium.

The decision lay with Mr Johnson to give the scheme the final go-ahead as a development of strategic importance to London.

Campaigners and local MPs had called on the mayor to refuse the plan.

'Major boost'

Mr Johnson said he "shared the sadness of many about the demise of dog racing from this historic corner of London".

But he said he believed the proposal would provide a "major boost" for Walthamstow.

The developer, London & Quadrant Housing Trust (L&Q) has said the plan will create up to 250 jobs and high quality homes for people on a range of incomes.

Mr Johnson said: "A huge £2m contribution to the surrounding community has been secured from the developer which will deliver vastly improved local sports and leisure facilities for generations of east Londoners to enjoy."

But Rick Holloway, of Save Our Stow, questioned the developer's pledges and said it was not the end of the campaign.

He said the planning process had been a "total whitewash" from stage one.

Mr Holloway said: "Where is everyone being employed? In the nursery? And 24 units is not 'many affordable homes'.

"The world's number one dog racing track which used to have 5,000 people going to it every week is now going to be a fortress housing estate."

'Preserving architecture'

Both local MPs - Conservative Iain Duncan Smith and Labour's Stella Creasy - have opposed the scheme.

Mr Duncan Smith had said he would call on the mayor to stop the scheme after information was released under the Freedom of Information Act showing the developer was expected to make a £14.5m loss and would have to renege on community funding obligations.

But L&Q told BBC London it was confident of meeting its Section 106 community funding commitments.

Andy Rowland, a director at L&Q, said: "We look forward to beginning work as soon as we can, subject to meeting the remaining conditions in the planning process.

"Our scheme will bring £50m worth of investment into the borough, including £3.8 million to improve local leisure, education, health and transport facilities.

"This will preserve the architectural heritage of this iconic and historic site for the whole community."

The plan is now subject to any action the Secretary of State may wish to take.



BBC © 2014 [The BBC is not responsible for the content of external sites. Read more.](#)