

Southmere Green, Erith Marshes (London Borough of Bexley)



Erith morning – Photo courtesy of John Wylie

Southmere Green is a 45 acre area of open grazing marsh within Erith Marshes, which lie close to the River Thames in the London Borough of Bexley. The Marshes are designated Metropolitan Open Land and a an Area of Metropolitan Importance to Nature Conservation. They may be considered as an isolated 'fragment' of more rural land within the Green Belt a short distance to the East. In 2005 the then Labour controlled Bexley Council granted full consent for an Innovation Centre and warehouses on approximately 5 acres of the site and outline consent for warehouses and industry on the remainder. These permissions were subject to conditions to protect and enhance the main ditches on the site, which were an important habitat for water voles. However, the first ditch was filled in without removal of water voles and the second ditch was strimmed flat, destroying its special habitat value. The landowner - Tilfen Land Ltd - is currently subject to legal proceedings over this matter. The photo below is of the destroyed second ditch. Compare it to the following picture of the fully reeded ditch prior to the destruction. Last year Tilfen agreed to repair the damage, but no work has started and the ditch remains a wildlife free zone. The Innovation Centre has been built, but no further construction has started.





Erith ditch (before) - Photo courtesy of John Wylie

More recently, in 2006, the supermarket company, Asda, applied for planning permission to build a large distribution depot on 20 acres of the site. We re hopeful that the new Conservative administration at Bexley is currently minded to refuse this application on the grounds that it doesn't want any more warehouses in the Borough. The whole of Bexley is now an Air Quality Management Zone and it is agreed that road traffic related air pollution has already reached acceptable limits.

Planning application reference: 06/12685/FULM ASDA

Contact details for campaign groups.

Bexley Local Agenda 21 Natural Environment Focus Group (NEFG)
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