

Kilburn Times

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Homeless Hendon's fans will fight for the club's future

FOOTBALL BY BEN KOSKY

HENDON fans have voted to set up a Supporters' Trust after it was revealed that the club will almost certainly be left homeless at the end of the season.

The Greens have played at their Claremont Road ground for 78 years, but the club's owners, the Arbiter Group, will hand the lease back to Barnet Council, who intend to sell the site for housing development.

Plans for a move to the nearby Cophall Sports Centre have been scrapped due to cost, leaving the Ryman League strugglers with little option but to move to a new ground or lose their identity.

And supporters decided unanimously, at an emergency meeting last week, to establish a trust and attempt to safeguard the club's uncertain future.

Spokesman Simon Lawrence confirmed that their preferred Plan B is for Hendon to share Wingate & Finchley's Abrahams Stadium from the start of next season.

Informal discussions with the Southern League club have already taken place, but Lawrence stressed: "Nothing is definite, but the way forward we are pursuing most aggressively is a groundshare.

"If we're able to influence the way the club moves forward, then our firm belief is that is the most feasible option. It needs to be the right deal for us and also for Wingate.

"There are a number of criteria. One is to stay in the borough or at least in the area, another is to go to a ground with the required grading.

"I think it's fair to say that supporters wouldn't go to say, Milton Keynes, to watch the team every other week.

"The security and tenure of the host club is also a very important factor because no-one wants Hendon to become a nomadic club with no home."

Premier Division rivals Wealdstone fell into that category after selling their Lower Mead site in 1990, since when they have played at Watford, Edgware Town and, most recently, Northwood.

But, if the Greens cannot reach a groundsharing

arrangement by the start of next season, they might be forced to consider merging with another club or even fold altogether.

Lawrence added: "We're trying to establish a base camp for next year and the year after that. Where we are then depends almost entirely on how much awareness and money we can raise.

"It's our club and it's in our hearts, but we believe that, if you scratch the surface of any non-league football fan, they realise that a world without clubs like ours wouldn't be a better place."

The fans' group plan to meet with Ryman League officials in the near future and are hoping to formally establish and register the trust in the spring.

For information on how to join the Hendon Supporters' Trust, call 020 8201 9494 or log on to www.hendonfc.net