

# Farm must stay, protesters insist

by Samantha Adler

**GUILDFORD** Borough council's (GBC) decision to put the farm in the Surrey Hills for sale has been met with fierce opposition.

So far more than 30 people around the borough have joined the Save Tyting Farm campaign to stop the sale of the 115 acres site in Halfpenny Green in St Martha's.

The recently formed group is also had a "significant sponsor" after distributing flyers across Guildford, and is calling for more residents to join them.

Campaigners believe that GBC's plan to sell the farm in lots at "development value" rather than agricultural value means it is doing everything possible to invite development and preclude agriculture.

"The issue is one of protecting this outstanding landscape and the fact is the only sustainable way to protect agricultural landscape is by retaining it in agricultural use," John Rigg, a spokesman for the campaign, explained.

"Once sold off in lots to possibly six different owners, the current landscape will be lost for farming and future generations as farming ends and commercial pressures take over. The council is encouraging this outcome by its actions."

GBC's planning guidance for

## Campaigners' options

SAVE Tyting Farm campaigners are asking GBC to consider the following options:

□ Tyting Farm should not be sold but retained and managed by GBC.

□ The farm could be leased to a farmer in the borough.

□ The land could be managed by the Surrey Wildlife Trust.

□ The estate option - GBC

could indicate to buyers a willingness to grant consent for one large dwelling on the site of the original Tyting house.

The prospective purchaser would have an obligation to maintain pastures, hedges and one or two key buildings.

Strong covenants would be in place to protect the landscape.

prospective purchasers' states that "conversion to small-scale business use will take preference for the farm buildings".

Mr Rigg said this could lead to large vehicle movements, parking areas, noise and intensification of use.

However, Cllr Tony Rooth, the council's lead member for finance and resources, said that there were major conditions that buyers had to meet before the re-use and adaptation of rural buildings was granted.

Mr Rigg, one of the co-founders of the campaign, described the decision to sell the farm, classified as an area of outstanding natural beauty and within the green belt, as a "catastrophic proposal".

He added: "Neither home owners nor developers can be relied on to have the knowledge or will to protect the agri-

cultural nature of the landscape. The more the land deteriorates the more alternative uses become acceptable to the planners."

Tim Harrold, Surrey chairman of the Campaign to Protect Rural England, said: "I cannot accept the logic of selling off this landholding when GBC has been buying land in other parts of the district to prevent development such as Effingham Common."

Cllr Rooth said GBC's decision was taken as a last resort following considerable discussion and careful consideration of alternative uses. In the past the farm was subject to a series of agricultural tenancies, the last of which ended with non-payment of rent.

"The council recognises the environmental importance of Tyting Farm not only to residents but also to many walkers

and visitors who appreciate its beautiful setting," he explained. "When assessing offers, the council will consider all sale options so as to ensure that the farmland retains the greatest protection for this invaluable rural asset."

A spokesman for GBC added: "It (Tyting Farm) is already subject to significant legal and planning restraints and the conditions of sale now include additional covenants to protect it still further.

"In particular the farmland is to be used only as grazing land for equestrian or restricted agricultural purposes."

Guildford resident Mary Bedforth, who supports the campaign, said GBC should rethink its decision to sell Tyting Farm, which she described as "wonderful and unique".

However, Cllr Rooth added: "The Government requires the council to justify its holding of various types of property.

"Unfortunately Tyting Farm did not perform well due to its size and condition, together with the poor quality of the land and is no longer viable for farming purposes.

"However, we are confident the extra conditions we have put in place will help protect the land from inappropriate development and save the beauty of its landscape."

Mr Rigg said that GBC is proposing clauses in any sale to share in development value.

Cllr Rooth, however,



Barbara Winkworth, Ken Tigwell, Linda Cannon and John Rigg make their feelings known about the future of Tyting Farm.

explained that this was a deterrent to development.

"Someone who thinks they are going to develop Tyting Farm has to jump more fences than the Grand National and even if they get to the winning post, part of their winnings are taken by the council.

"This is another protection so that people do not go into this for development reasons."

For more information visit [www.savetytingfarm.com](http://www.savetytingfarm.com).

