



SAVE WIMBLEDON PARK LTD

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AELTC's cynical attempt to change the law rejected emphatically by the House of Lords

Late on November 3rd Lord Gus O'Donnell, a director of the All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC) was forced to drop his proposed amendment 250 to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill after receiving strong criticism from peers of all political parties.

The amendment sought retrospectively to remove 45 years' worth of public rights over open spaces, effectively favouring private landowners in general and AELTC in particular. It would have undone 150 years of statutory protection for public land.

This decision means that SWP's legal challenge, scheduled for the High Court in January 2026 remains on track. The amendment would have validated Merton Council's 1986 lease and 1993 sale of the 73 acre former golf course to AELTC without properly consulting the community, ending the community's case before it reached court.

The full proceedings can be seen on Hansard here, from 21:30 onwards
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2025-11-03/debates/f273eb74-db54-423a-be58-e748a43149d2/LordsChamber>

The tireless Kieran McCarthy at Putney News has provided an excellent summary of the debate here <https://putney.news/2025/11/04/wimbledon-park-amendment-abandoned-after-peers-condemn-erosion-of-green-space-protection/>

Here are some quotes from the key participants:

"Amendment 250 seems an undesirable bit of retrospective legislation designed to enable the All England Lawn Tennis Club not to have to negotiate fairly with the people it is disadvantaging as a result of its plans." **Lord Lucas (Conservative)**

"This amendment has caused substantial concern that it erodes the protection of green space and removes long-standing public rights to green spaces, where the land is sold by a local authority, with or without public consultation." **Baroness Young of Old Scone (Labour)**

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“You cannot make decisions of this enormity without proper, full consultation, listening to voices, hearing what they have to say, responding to them and not just doing a steamroller job, which too many developments seem to want to do.” **Baroness Pinnock (Liberal Democrat)**

“I find it difficult to support an amendment that alters everything across the board. Doing a proper consultation has to be the approach, rather than what is proposed in this amendment.” **Lord Cromwell (Crossbench)**

“From the late 1970s to 2019, 10% of what was public land in Britain transferred into private hands. That is 2 million hectares of land.” **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (Green)**

This ill-judged attempt by AELTC suggests a new level of desperation: their position is becoming increasingly untenable. It is fundamentally wrong to use legislation to backdate a change in the law to remove public rights. Perhaps they are not confident in their legal position ahead of the January 2026 court case.

Simon Wright, a spokesperson for Save Wimbledon Park said *“The wisdom of the combined forces of all parties in the House of Lords is all the more reason for AELTC to talk to the local community to find a way forward acceptable to everyone. In calling for this we have the explicit support of both local MPs, Fleur Anderson (Putney, Labour) and Paul Kohler (Wimbledon, Liberal Democrat).”*