



I will write again once the notice has been issued. If you require any further information or advice, please do not hesitate to contact me.'

Di's response:-

'I am delighted with the outcome and it will be good to see the site restored-. They have recently brought pipes which have been dumped below the compound hill.

I notice this Red Sun firm have acquired on the Croft estate near Asda but the signs give no detail about development. This company needs watching!

NB. This photo by David Allan shows activity on the land which needed another call to councillors and WBC specialists. (Apparently this is allowable as 'removal of weeds'.)

We will be keeping an active eye on progress here.

A guided tour of the former Bidston Observatory - Grade 2 listed



A rare opportunity to learn about the vital services once provided for accurately calibrating chronometers and calculating tides, worldwide. The deep cellars gave even temperatures and less seismic vibration. The building is now run as an Artistic Research Centre.

Photos by Theresa Irving. Views to St.James church, Birkenhead, the ship - RFA Fort Rosalie after her refit at Cammell Lairds, the former Spillers Grain Warehouse - now apartments, and the Liverpool waterfront



Civic Voice - for a full article on this by Terry Edgar, visit our website

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WIRRAL MATTERS

News and Views from The Wirral Society - founded 1928

The Wirral Committee of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

President: Professor John Tarn OBE DL FRIBA FRSA FRHistS FSA

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AUTUMN 2019

GREEN BELT STILL UNDER THREAT - we campaign on

In these uncertain times it is vitally important to keep safe our agricultural land on Wirral



Harvest is in the fields between Rest Hill Road and Levers Causeway, Storeton . Right - an Irby Crop

Chairs' Report - for the full report and any updates , visit our website

Liverpool City Region

The Society wrote to Steve Rotheram, supporting the Metro Mayors' initiatives taken at an international conference on attracting new industry.

Our Metro Mayor told us he -

- had strategic planning powers, a Spatial Development Strategy was being developed, with due regard to environmental issues & the Society would be consulted on the document.
- was committed to prioritising brownfield sites as part of a 'Brownfield First' policy
- had created a funding team aimed at facilitating the remediation of various Brownfield sites in the Region, with the aim of making them available for development – principally for housing.

Changes at Wallasey Town Hall

There is a new political balance at Wallasey Town Hall and we are optimistic it will bring more transparency into Council decision-making. All committees are now under 'no overall control' and key chairmanships, including Planning, Business and Environment are now held by councillors from a broader political spectrum. The abandonment of the current narrow Cabinet system of governance is being investigated for a possible change next year.

We learn that Member briefings on the Golf Resort and the Local Plan have already taken place.



Golf Courses in Wirral Borough

A delegated decision on the future provision of Council-owned golf courses has been called-in for scrutiny, with a recommendation passed to ‘pause the process, pending a fact-finding visit to all four municipal courses’.

Proposed Hoylake ‘Golf’ Resort

It was heartening that a special scrutiny meeting recently recommended to the Cabinet, that the Council’s investment profile and limited resources would be better served if this business venture was funded on the open market, rather than through Council borrowing, and it should not enter into a separate agreement to fund the Celtic Manor project at this time. This was welcome news.

We are still seeking to clarify the situation regarding a penalty clause the Council entered into, secretly, earlier in the year, with the Jack Nicklaus Group, which would reputedly cost the taxpayer £20m should the Council seek another developer to create a new golf –related facility in Hoylake.

Furthermore, if, as it seems, the Council is set on increasing the distance between itself & the developers, then should a planning application be submitted, the Planning Officer would now be able to put forward a recommendation free of any constraints. If such an application were submitted and contained the current proposal which required breaching the Wirral Green Belt with a 160 + housing development, this should surely in itself be sufficient to lead to an automatic recommendation to refuse permission. We can see no case for any exceptions to be made on such a proposal, either by the Council or, on Appeal, by the Government’s Planning Inspectorate.

We hope the developers will now seek Pre-Application Advice from the Council and save themselves a lot of money!

Wirral Council’s Local Plan -

As part of the process towards producing this Plan, the Wirral Council has (quietly) published its Action Plan, as directed by the Secretary of State.

We note the Council has now been obliged to increase the number of houses it’s required to build, in the coming years, from 12000 to 14460. This is due to a legal requirement that a 20% ‘buffer’ be added, as the number of homes delivered in the last few years has been below target.

It is also important to note that the Council have now confirmed that they are NOT going to produce a “properly evidenced and assessed deviation from the target” (which could have produced a lower target) and the Council says it “does not believe there are exceptional circumstances which justify an alternative approach”. This is despite the Housing Minister informing the Council that the use of the standard methodology to calculate housing need is NOT MANDATORY. This supports our view that the Council was never interested in the first place in seeing a much lower, more realistic target.

The Action Plan should include how Wirral Borough will ensure that a Local Plan is underpinned by an appropriate and up to date technical evidence base. We suspect the Minister will not be impressed that this Plan lists 65 ‘Local Plan Evidence Based’ Documents, of which only 5 are actually “current” and “require no further work”. All this shows that despite threats of Government intervention, there is still an enormous amount of work to be done to complete the Local Plan.

Hooton Hangars Trust

Regular readers will know the Society is keen to support the Trust’s work wherever possible. It is very encouraging to see the progress made on the formerly derelict Hangar 16. The roof is now on, supported by newly-constructed Belfast trusses. Do visit their website to see more of their work and make a visit there if you can – it’s 2 minutes off the Eastham Oil Terminal exit of the M53

Photos: Hooton Park Trust

Rock Ferry High School site

There has been much concern, led by a residents’ group from Rock Ferry, over an anticipated planning application which would see development on the site of the former High School. The plan would include the conversion of the Listed school building itself and the construction of some 183 units around the school. There’s a real possibility of the loss of many trees, to enable this size of development to be fitted in. Our view is that as Wirral Council own the site and it has just signed up’ to a Climate-Change agreement, it would be appropriate for it to stipulate that all the healthy trees should now be recorded and ensure all have Tree Preservation Orders put on them. The number of units to be built should then be adjusted accordingly.

Brook Meadow, Neston - report from Alan Passmore

At Brook Meadow, off Church Lane, Neston, McCarthy and Stone are intending to build a block of 50 retirement apartments with a mere 36 parking spaces. The site is of several acres comprising meadow surrounded by woodland with a derelict house on the southern edge, accessed by a drive along the perimeter, which also leads to three neighbouring properties.

Some years ago a number of mature trees were felled without permission to provide access to the meadow for its future development; the owners were required to replace these trees, but no action has been taken either by them or by the enforcement authority. This is cited by opponents of the scheme as one reason why the development should not go ahead. Others relate to the restricted access along Church Lane and Eldon Terrace from Burton Road, an area already congested because there is no off-street parking, the restricted access to the site itself from Church Lane, the limited number of parking places to be provided on site and the amount of additional traffic generated in this already congested area. The three-storey block is generally seen as too dominant in mass in an area without any buildings of this scale or height, therefore substantially impinging on neighbouring properties. This application has generated more opposition than I have noted for any such application in the area; its impact is seen as very similar to that at Willaston British Legion, which was recently refused by the Council. Because of its situation I would see it as a less meritorious case than the Willaston one.

Progress on the threatened Shodwell Footpath site featured in our Summer newsletter

Member Di Skilbeck got in touch - ‘I walk along that path with my dog and was surprised to see the mature trees being felled and removed. That area was then tipped with rubbish to form a level platform and subsequently fenced off. Then a few weeks ago all the woodland above the footpath was razed to the ground and is enclosed by Herras fencing. I was horrified to learn that all this activity was illegal. Let me know when I need to make a banner!!

David Allan of Conservation Areas Wirral + Eastham Village Preservation Society replied -

‘Cllr Irene Williams took the matter up with Steve Lacey the council’s senior enforcement officer and he has responded’ -

‘The owner of the site has not provided the necessary information to make their planning application valid. The application has therefore been returned to them.

I have met with the Borough Solicitor and we are in the process of drafting an enforcement notice that will require the unauthorised use of the land as a civil engineering depot to cease and the removal of all structures, shipping containers, caravans etc, as well as requiring any imported waste to be removed from the land in order to reinstate the original land levels.