

Wigginton Park To Be Built Upon - January 2016

Many people were shocked by Tamworth Borough Council's application, to itself, to grant itself permission for housing on part of Wigginton Park, and right against the historic Wigginton Lodge (Tamworth Rugby Club). They have been even more dismayed that despite overwhelming public objections, the Council's Planning Committee voted it through by 8 votes to 5. These 8 elected representatives ignored public opinion, the passionate representations of Councillor Richard Kingstone on behalf of Mercian Ward residents, the expert information supplied by bodies such as the Staffordshire Gardens and Parks Trust and the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (Staffordshire Branch), and the views of The Tamworth and District Civic Society.

If this housing is built, the setting of Wigginton Lodge, and any potential to enhance this historic listed building, will quite literally be ruined forever. The parkland will be permanently eroded. Many people are sceptical that the planned encroachment into, and urbanisation of, this much-loved Georgian landscaped park, will stop with this proposed development.

We are of the view that the park should be preserved as a public pleasure park, as intended when purchased by the Council - and not regarded as a building-site. As for the Lodge, the council's former parks/nursery depot stands in the Lodge's curtilage, on its kitchen garden and outbuildings.

We feel that the responsible action by the Council as *custodians* of this historic site on behalf of the people, would be to enhance and improve the Lodge and its parkland for public benefit. Selling off the Lodge's grounds, together with woodland and parkland, for housing, is inappropriate.

It is a great pity that more members of the public do not find the time to attend Planning Committee, and indeed other council meetings, to listen to and observe how councillors perform, and how they vote. It is an informative experience.

The public ought to know how individual councillors vote on the decisions that are shaping our town, and impacting upon the lives of present residents and future generations.

So, in the Wigginton Park case, please note that the five councillors who voted **AGAINST** the housing application were: Tony Madge (UKIP, Stonydelph Ward); Ken Norchi (Labour, Bolehall); Jeremy Oates (Conservative, Trinity); Tom Peale (Labour, Amington); Patrick Standen (Labour, Wilnecote).

The eight councillors who voted **FOR** the council's own application, to build houses on Wigginton Park, were: Marion Couchman (Labour, Belgrave); and seven Conservative councillors: John Chesworth (Spital); Steven Claymore (Castle); Michael Greatorex (Mercian); Michael Oates (Trinity); Evelyn Rowe (Amington); and Simon and Joy Goodall (both Belgrave).