



FESTIVAL SITE PLAN 'WILL RUIN PROM LANDSCAPE'

Liverpool's landmark Garden Festival Site, the focus of a series of failed development plans over the years, has yet again become the centre of controversy and protest following the unannounced felling of more than 1,000 trees by property developers.

The trees were originally planted as saplings over 20 years ago to provide a woodland setting for the 1984 Garden Festival. Over the years the site has turned into something of a wildlife reserve and a much-loved legacy landscape for the Mersey riverfront seen from the prom.

Property developers, Langtree McLean Limited, have plans - as yet unapproved - to put 1300 flats and houses on the 88-acre riverside site.

The felling has been seen as a pre-emptive strike against objections to the scale of the development and its impact on the neighbourhood and on the promenade.

WAS FELLING ILLEGAL?

The move has caused outrage in the local community. When the tree-felling started several local residents contacted the developers to protest - pointing out that the bird nesting season had already commenced in this early spring. It is illegal to fell trees at nesting time under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

The developer has since claimed that they had obtained a felling licence in October 2005.

Over 100 people attended a public meeting at Lark Lane Community Centre on 1st April to discuss the felling which was seen as a bad omen for how Langtree McLean intended to carry out their development plans.

SHOCK SPARKS NEW CAMPAIGN

At the meeting there was shock that the clearing was taking place before any planning hearings had been held regarding the proposed development.

One resident summed up the mood of the meeting; "Langtree McLean's plans are the latest in a long line of proposed developments over the years - and the record is that the previous plans have come to nothing.

The difference here seems to be that Langtree McLean intend to force planning permission by destroying whatever stands in their way. We shouldn't let them get away with it."

HUGE POLLUTION HAZARD

The developer's "high-handed and hasty" tactics were seen as especially worrying as there is a huge pollution hazard from building on the festival site which will affect the local community.

Karen Fletcher, a local resident who has been involved in previous campaigns to defend the Garden Festival Site, said:

"Any development has to solve major problems regarding the seriously contaminated nature of the underlying land on the site both during the building and for future residents."

"There are also huge issues regarding traffic and local amenities which have to be addressed. Langtree McLean should prove their case before destroying any more of the woodland which has taken twenty years to grow."

Contact: If you want to help save the Garden Festival site contact Lucy Page by e-mail savethefestivalgardens@googlemail.com or by post to: Lucy Page, Save The Garden Festival Site Campaign, c/o Community Centre, Old Police Station, Lark Lane. L17.



Langtree McLean's own printed promotional brochure published in November 2006 shows how their plans for a series of seven 7-storey high waterfront apartments will impact on the appearance of the public walkway on the promenade.

Perhaps not surprisingly this angle is not shown in the developer's latest 'cyberspace' walkthrough of their plans launched this month ahead of the planning meetings.

CAMPAIGN DELIVERS 450 DETAILED LETTERS OBJECTING TO SCHEME

The new campaign to save the Garden Festival Site got off to a flying start with a day of demonstration in front of the festival site on Sunday 15th April attended by more than 700 people.

More than 450 letters detailing objections to Langtree McLean's development were signed at the demonstration and these letters were forwarded to the Council's Planning Department in Dale Street ahead of the official deadline for objections on Tuesday 17th April.

Lucy Page, a St Michael's resident who is fronting the new campaign, said she was delighted with the public response the Save The Garden Festival Site campaign had already won.

"We had an incredibly busy day at the demonstration on Sunday with hundreds of people queuing to sign letters objecting to the plans."

"Nobody wants to see this unique part of the riverfront destroyed – but unfortunately this is just what Langtree McLean are planning."

'PRIDE IN OUR PROMS?'

At the demonstration there was considerable concern over the future of the prom in front of the Festival Site.

From the developer's own plans it is clear that the current uninterrupted woodland landscape would be destroyed – replaced by a sequence of overwhelming 7-storey-high apartment blocks.

From their proposal it also looks as if they intend to build on the green slope which currently forms part of the promenade for walkers and which is public land.

The effect of this proposal will be to reduce the promenade to a riverside pavement.

This is a land grab from public land – and it beggars belief that the council are even contemplating sacrificing any of the promenade to developers.

An Executive Board of the City Council is meeting on Friday 27th April 2007 to discuss this very plan.

At the prom in front of the garden festival site we currently have a successful wildlife habitat and a beautifully landscaped woodland that has taken over 20 years to come to maturity.

We shouldn't let the developers destroy it.

SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL VALUE?

Since the demonstration we have been approached by people asking about the developer's claim in the Echo (April 16th 2007) that: "The woodlands were of no significant ecological value."

Our own expert advice – including from one specialist who has been keeping records about the site since its creation for the Garden Festival in 1984 – is that more than 100 species of birds visit the site during the year and 30 species of birds are presently breeding in the woodland at the Garden Festival Site.

The species which are currently breeding at the site include: blackbird, blackcap, bullfinch, carrion crow, chaffinch, chiffchaff, collared dove, dunnoek, goldcrest, goldfinch, great spotted woodpecker, jay, linnet, magpie, mallard, mistle thrush, moorhen, robin, song thrush, sparrowhawk, stock dove, blue tit, coal tit, great tit, long-tailed tit, whitethroat, willow warbler, woodpigeon and wren. Species which have bred in recent years include Tawny Owl, Lesser Whitethroat, lapwing, grey partridge and Lesser Redpoll. Then there are three grassland species of birds – bunting, skylark and meadow pipit – that also breed in the land to the south east of the Garden Festival Site. Several species of bird which actually nest outside the area such as Swifts, House Martins and starlings also use the Garden Festival Site during the breeding season.

SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE VALUE!

But perhaps the best reply to the company comes from a local mum :

"Our kids can actually see all this woodland nature in reality not just on the TV. The woodlands may be of 'no significant ecological value' to a property developer - but they are of very great ecological value to the children of Liverpool. "

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The more people who join the campaign the more chance we have of saving the Garden Festival Site

