

**PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS** to the currently proposed Langtree Mclean redevelopment of Liverpool's Garden Festival Site with specific reference to the planning manager's assessment of the planning application (060/3442) to be heard on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2007.

"don't it always seem to go – you  
don't know what you've got  
..... 'til it's gone."



2. Introduction – the Save the Garden Festival Site Campaign

**Principal Objections**

3. The plan won't deliver an economically viable Park
4. The plan actually offers more Devastation than Regeneration
5. The 'Bund' development will destroy the Prom's unique Liverpool Landscape
6. Accepting this plan will undermine Liverpool's Green Wedge policy
7. The planners don't even know how many trees will be lost
8. This plan exposes people to an entirely unnecessary health risk from contaminants
9. This plan is based on willfully ignoring the real Traffic Impact
10. This plan simply ignores the City's Housing Policy

**Other Materials**

Formal Letter of Objection

Newsletter - April 26<sup>th</sup> 2007

Newsletter – May 7<sup>th</sup> 2007

Newsletter – May 15<sup>th</sup> 2007

About the Garden Festival Site

**This 17-page document is a specific response to the 118-page “assessment” by a Council Planning Manager of the Langtree McLean proposal to redevelop the Garden Festival Site (including the waterfront landscaped woodlands) with some 1300 flats etc.**

**This is a necessarily short document, produced at short notice by ordinary citizens (running against a ‘*planning requirements*’ deadline) but we hope that the objections it presents will be given a fair hearing.**



This document summarizes the principal objections to the proposed Langtree Mclean redevelopment which have been raised by members of the Save The Garden Festival Site Campaign.

The campaign was set up at a public meeting attended by more than 100 people on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> April following public shock at the unannounced clear-felling of trees at the garden festival site in the second week of March.

Since then a public demonstration on the prom in front of the Garden Festival Site (which gathered more than 500 signatures objecting to the proposed development) and subsequent meetings have gained consistent concerned support from local residents and people from across Liverpool.

At the first public meeting the following points emerged as people's key concerns:

1. The Garden Festival Site had been shamefully neglected but the woods themselves were far from derelict.
  - Over 23 years the woodlands have grown into a very successful (if unintended) wildlife reserve. Even people who did not enter the 'ineffectively fenced-off' area valued the Garden Festival woodlands as a unique and beautiful landscape on the prom.
2. There was widespread shock at the way that Langtree McLean had managed the tree-felling without consulting the local community – or even informing them what was happening. It was felt to be a very bad omen for what the developers would actually get up to - if the Council was so daft as to take their promises at face value.
  - Local residents were especially concerned that a similarly cavalier attitude by the developer would prove calamitous when it came to handling the pollution hazard caused by the seriously contaminated nature (including asbestos) of the underlying land on the site.
3. There was real concern that levels of traffic and others problems created by the 'huge scale' of the development were being handled in an arrogant and dismissive way by both the developers and the planners.
  - There was actual general disbelief that the plans could include the destruction of this unique part of the waterfront with the building of 'huge 7-storey high' apartment blocks directly overlooking the promenade – effectively 'cutting to shreds' the existing uninterrupted woodland landscape.

Since the first meeting the Campaign has brought together a range of people to look at the developer's proposals in more detail and we have published their findings in newsletters and via the Internet. A detailed letter of objection to the proposal was also drafted (see page 12) and has been used by over 450 people as the formal basis of the campaign's objection.

The following pages present the concerns and objections of the campaign in specific response to the "Planning Manager's Assessment of the Planning Application": Item 4e pages 85-203 re planning application 060/3442.

## The plan won't deliver an economically viable Park

The developer promises a new and distinct public park – but is this true?

- The design of the park has not been subject to adequate consultation with the local community who would wish to use it. The 1999 Consultation exercise showed that the local community overwhelmingly supported recreation and nature conservation uses of the site. These could be delivered relatively cheaply – in fact, the whole site has been assessed as suitable for SNCV status despite the lack of any investment over a substantial period. The design of the park being considered today will involve long term and expensive security and maintenance. For instance, the “unfunded” Grand Axis will inevitably become a focus for “anti-social behaviour” such as throwing objects down from above.
- Will the reduced dowry of not much more than £2 million pounds be sufficient to pay for maintenance and security of this park? It is very difficult to believe so. It may be argued that this is not a planning matter. However, given that the entire justification for supporting this application is the provision of this park, then it certainly has been made so. This is not a minor matter – remember that Priory Wood came with a dowry for its maintenance. Whatever happened to that?
- Will the park anyway be a public park? Page 155 of the Case Officer's report states, “It is acknowledged that certain parts of the park may need to be subject to an appropriate entrance charge.” So is the only part of the site guaranteed to be available to the public free of charge that part of the site which has always been open to the public?
- Will the park be distinctive and appropriate to its coastal location? It largely duplicates facilities available nearby at Otterspool and relatively near by at Sefton Park, Princes Park and Calderstones Park. What would be distinct is a park that retains unspoilt coastline, retains existing tree lined views from Otterspool Park and is focused mainly around nature conservation. There is nowhere more suitable for watching wildlife within several miles.
- So yes the vast majority of local people would like to see this area better managed but they do not want to see yet another “manicured park” bought with a huge number of flats, destroying the quality and tranquillity of this lovely stretch of the Promenade.
- The absence of noise pollution allowing enjoyment of the sound of the river is an issue not given any consideration in the Case Officer's Report.
- If landowners are allowed to exploit this ‘loophole’ to develop upon Green Wedge land there will be considerable temptation for them to manage such land as poorly as possible and a very dangerous precedent will be set.
- Is then a decision urgent? We feel confident that the local community would rather be fully consulted about the nature of the park and have a genuinely sustainable park delivered rather than accept a high maintenance but underfunded option. The council should have confidence in its own UDP and the Consultation brief issued in 1999. The prospect of the Oriental Gardens while alluring will soon lose much of their appeal if situated beside a dual carriageway as implied in the second bullet point on page 139. Whilst the scale and massing of apartments on previously Undeveloped Coastline will impact on people's enjoyment of the Prom for generations.

***“The main reason for the Planning Manager considering any residential element in this location is only as enabling development to ensure that the park can be brought back into use for the wider community benefit.”***

Case Officer's Report (Page 83 – Issue 4)

- Even in its current shamefully mismanaged and neglected state the Garden Festival Site provides a hugely effective wildlife reserve – with woodlands that support the nesting of some 30 species of birds and which also provide extraordinary ‘country walks’ for the brave souls who enter the ‘fenced-off’ area.

In addition the riverside “embankment” provides a magnificent uninterrupted woodland landscape extending about ½ mile along the prom and enjoyed by everybody who walks or cycles along the waterfront.

Altogether the ‘fenced-off’ area of the Garden Festival Site comprises some 30 acres of the woodlands that were originally planted as a backdrop to the display gardens of the 1984 Festival - as well as some 15 acres of ‘hard standing’ i.e. the tarmac and concrete on which buildings such as the Festival Hall and car parks were positioned.

Contrary to various claims made by the developer that the woodlands are in some way deficient they are in fact quite magnificent including mature ‘specimen’ trees which were already 30 foot high when they were planted in 1984.

In addition there are some 30 acres of rough grassland which has always been entirely open to the public – and is also nesting ground for birds such as the skylark whose song pretty well transforms a day on the prom and is widely recognized as the soul of an English summer.

**So just how much of this parkland is to “be brought back into use for the wider community benefit”?**

Well the riverside embankment is to be trashed for a series of lucrative 8-storey high waterfront apartment blocks.

A vast chunk of the inland fenced-off woodlands is also to be destroyed – because the ‘hard standing’ which was the area originally intended to be developed on the site is insufficient to generate enough cash for the Langtree McLean proposal to bring the parkland “back into use for the wider community benefit”.

In what is described as ‘mitigation’ for this loss of trees (which have been growing for the last 23 years) the developer intends to let rip in the areas of rough grassland which will now be “lollipop-treed” (in mitigation) and the skylarks will have to take their chances in a couple of designated skylark zones.

So in short **this** parkland – which (without anybody planning it ) has grown over 23 years into a real piece of the Liverpool landscape - is simply not going “to be brought back into use for the wider community benefit” – it is going to be destroyed.

**In 2007 do our planners follow well-established planning rules designed to prevent development disasters?**

***Or do they say:***

***“Good Grief, surely that cannot be the time...it’s nearly Liverpool’s Capital Of Culture Year in 2008...so let’s slap dash into a development where any regeneration however small justifies every destruction however great...let’s just do it...and do it quick...”***



## Destroying the Prom

The Finger blocks, planned for the riverside embankment of the site are the most contentious part of the build element.

The development of these blocks will not be sympathetic to the area. They will ruin the pleasing line of sight one has when looking from the promenade, when looking north from the Festival Hill (the highest part of the application site) and also when looking south from parts of the Dingle.

Given the siting of these apartment blocks, the arrangements that will have to be made for working space, service provision and access, it is highly unlikely that the existing woodland landscape will be retained along this embankment.

The developers are promoting the views from these apartment blocks. Given that the trees along this stretch have the potential to grow to much greater heights than at present, it is highly unlikely that the developers will want them obscuring the planned views.

In particular, there is a comment on pages 90/91 of this report which reads as follows:

'Concerns have been raised about the likely impact on tree loss within the promenade bund as a result of the 'finger' blocks which will overhang that bund.

This is acknowledged although the numbers and species of trees being offered up as being likely to be lost is considered to be inaccurate, particularly in connection with the assertion of significant numbers of Turkey Oaks being present'.

This vague and complacent comment contrasts directly with the report of Paul Slater who has been advising the campaign on ecological matters and who has carried out a tree count along the embankment.

"I am very concerned that it is not known how many of the trees will have to be removed, and also by the fact that the trees do not appear to have been properly surveyed. I recently investigated the trees along this embankment."

"Along here, I counted 768 Turkey Oaks that had been planted about twenty-five years ago. Many of these have reached a good size, and appear to be thriving, healthy trees. They have certainly been producing plenty of acorns in recent years. In addition to this figure, the applicants recently cut down over 125 semi-mature Turkey Oaks on the land side of this embankment."

"There are many hundreds of trees, of a variety of species, growing along this embankment, including many growing on the City Council side of the fenceline. Many of these, if not all of them, are under threat."

"One only has to look at the artists' impressions, on the applicants' promotional material, to see how different, and treeless, the site will be, if this application is given approval."

**Langtree Mclean and the Planning Manager talk a lot of fancy jargon about financing and regeneration but the hard facts are that nature without "financing" has already achieved real regeneration on this site.**

**The people opposing this application were brought together by the unannounced (and perhaps illegal) destruction by Langtree McLean of 1,000+ trees at this unique woodland site on the Mersey.**



savethefestivalgardens@googlemail.com  
**The Proposal Threatens Liverpool's  
Established Green Wedge Policy**

The area strategy of the Merseyside Development Corporation, published in 1990, envisaged that all the land on the river side of Riverside Drive should remain as an undeveloped leisure/amenity area, and as valuable open space.

The policy of keeping the area undeveloped, and providing a valuable green open space, was maintained during the consultation and adoption stages of the Liverpool Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

This policy is now being torn up by the Planning Manager.

- In particular the planned 8 storey-high riverside apartments termed 'the Fingers' is planned in an area of the Greenwedge that was not previously developed.

Giving planning permission for these apartments will seriously undermine the Greenwedge, Undeveloped Coastal Zone and other relevant policies in the UDP.

This will be used as a precedent for development in other parts of this Greenwedge and also within the Calderstones/Woolton Greenwedge - a large proportion of which is in private ownership.

In the past, the City Council has resisted planning applications for built development within the Calderstones/Woolton Greenwedge, even when the applicant has offered to open up previously private sites to the public. (Woolton Manor being an example where the application was refused.)

In the Case Report for this application, it is stated that the main reason for considering any residential development in this location is to provide funding for the restoration of the gardens.

This suggests that accountancy, rather than planning, is influencing the recommendation. It does not bode well for other parks and open spaces, if it is thought that they can only be maintained by allowing excessive development on parts of them.

**The Case Officer's Report declares that the finger blocks will only be visible from the Wirral and the river but actually they will also be visible from the far end of Otterspool Prom, from which the tree lined bund has the appearance of a headland, and all along the Prom to the Garden Festival Site. They will also be visible from Otterspool Park instead of the present pure backdrop of trees. This means that two well-loved amenities within this Green Wedge are going to seriously damaged – a vast oversight in the report.**

Relocation of the spoil on the Southern Grasslands, rather than improving this open part of the parkland, will actually damage the nature conservation value of this area and probably remove the habitat of one of Britain's most iconic birds - the skylark.



There are a number of comments within the Planning Manager's Assessment which need to be challenged.

In particular, there is a comment on pages 90 of this report which reads as follows:

'Concerns have been raised about the likely impact on tree loss within the promenade bund as a result of the 'finger' blocks which will overhang that bund.

This is acknowledged although the numbers and species of trees being offered up as being likely to be lost is considered to be inaccurate, particularly in connection with the assertion of significant numbers of Turkey Oaks being present'.

It is worrying that neither the developer nor the planner seem to know just how many of the trees will have to be removed.

The campaign's ecological adviser recently investigated the trees along this embankment – and counted 768 Turkey Oaks that had been planted about twenty-five years ago.

He reported "Many of these Turkey Oaks have reached a good size, and appear to be thriving, healthy trees. They have certainly been producing plenty of acorns in recent years. In addition to this figure, the applicants recently cut down over 125 semi-mature Turkey Oaks on the land side of the embankment."

- In addition the Case Officer's Report states 'there has been a significant amount of felling on the site already, fully in accordance with the terms of a felling licence issued by the Forestry Commission'.

Whilst it is true that the applicants have a felling licence from the Forestry Commission as part of an ongoing woodland management agreement, this felling licence does not cover the area marked out for development where the majority (approx. 70%) of clear felling has taken place. The Forestry Commission has commenced an investigation into this.

**16390 square metres of clear felling have been carried out outside the licence. The Forestry Commission is now investigating this.**



## The Proposal Presents An Unnecessary Health Risk

*“Notwithstanding efforts to minimise the amount of ‘cut’ into the site, a substantial amount of material is proposed to be re-graded between the developed core and the southern grassland areas that will require complete characterisation of the material that is to be excavated.”*

P145 of the Planning Manager’s Assessment

In his report the Planning Manager says that “continued liaison” between the applicant’s consultants, and the Environmental Health department will ensure that concerns are addressed so that there need not be any objections to the planning application on the grounds of Health Risk caused by the highly contaminated nature of the underlying landfill ground at the Garden Festival Site.

But the Save the Garden Festival Campaign is concerned that this liaison is being conducted on a basically inadequate basis of information – both in the limited nature of the studies carried out in the site and in the way that the information is made available to the public.

Or as the Planning Officer himself puts it “full blown contamination assessment...whilst desirable would be completely commercially unviable” and as such only a limited ‘amount of preliminary works have been undertaken’.

It seems rather paradoxical that there is a pollution hazard precisely because of the very large commercial scale of this development – cutting into ground that had previously been safely capped – but that the same commercial requirements dictate that only a ‘limited’ amount of safety work is undertaken.

The Planning Manager does not consider that the submission of a health impact assessment is necessary for this development. Whilst this is not statutorily required under planning legislation the system is in place for a reason. It is acknowledged that the site is contaminated, exactly with what is unknown – there may even be radiation along with heavy metals.

Even the clear felling that has already taken place could have released toxins for all we know. If there are found to be long-term health impacts from developing this site, and a Health Impact Assessment has not been undertaken, the council will be in a difficult legal position as the best protection for public health will clearly have been bypassed. This is too much responsibility to place upon the Head Of Environmental Health Services on behalf of the council.

Nuisance during construction – while construction traffic in quantitative terms may represent a small increase in overall traffic volume in noise and vibration terms it will be a substantial increase as it will be mainly lorries. 15 years of this will be a nightmare for local residents, particularly those living directly opposite access points.

Condition 14 (v) allows fires on this site. Are any fires safe on this site given the methane, bitumen and other flammable materials already in this ex-landfill?

**The new houses along riverside drive are deemed to need special noise reducing windows. What about existing properties.**

**Air quality – Page 151-2 make clear that air quality standards for 2010 are not going to be met. How can this act as justification for increasing pollution levels further?**



## The Plan ignores the real traffic situation

Traffic issues have always been a major problem for proposed developments to the Garden Festival Site. The 1999 consultation brief noted the inadequacy of this location for housing development due to the lack of an adequate infrastructure.

Riverside Drive is already reaching its capacity limits with the current growth of traffic and it is difficult to see how adding to the problem with a major housing estate will do anything other than create gridlock.

The plan proposes to get around this problem simply by ignoring the reality of the traffic situation and planning for the level of car-ownership, car parking etc. that the planners and the developers would prefer to see.

The impact of the real level of car use will then fall on the surrounding streets and roads – as local residents in the nearby St. Michael's find the on-street parking outside their homes being taken up by cars belonging to residents from the garden festival site – to say nothing about visitors to the Japanese gardens.

**The result is a plan which is certainly far from transparent; for example the only indication that riverside drive will actually have to be redeveloped as a Dual carriage way comes on Page 139 of the Planning Manager's Assessment - hidden away under Cycling Provision.**

The truth is that the busier Riverside Drive becomes the more difficult and dangerous it becomes to cross – and if it becomes a dual carriageway it will become even busier with more lorries using it and it will be even harder and more dangerous to cross.

At other times the plan seems to take an entirely unrealistic attitude to people's actual behavior – the car parking at the Garden Festival Site is proposed as a solution to the problem car congestion caused by the football players at Jericho Lane. This is despite the fact that there are already huge empty car parks actually nearer to Jericho lane than the Garden Festival Site. These car parks are unused because people aren't prepared to walk that far – why will they use the Garden Festival car park which is actually further away?

Altogether it is difficult to be happy with plans which seem to be based on traffic surveys which don't seem to add up especially in relation to developments such as John Lennon Airport, the Paradise Project and the Liverpool Arena and Conference Centre which are transforming traffic patterns in the City.

This development will make the dualling of Riverside Drive inevitable, at much expense. The Traffic Impact Assessment confirms that even without this additional development, road capacity will be exceeded unless measures are put in place to tackle it. The Report suggests that with the road modifications suggested, the capacity of the junctions can be increased sufficiently to leave us in no worse a situation than we are in now. However, it is important to be aware that these increases in capacity can only be achieved once – in other words, if used to support this development they can not be used to tackle existing expected congestion. This is going to make inevitable the dualling of this road at considerable cost - way above the cost of the proposed junction changes.

In addition, at the Aigburth Road/ Jericho Lane junction many people prefer to cross the road rather than use the underpass. If it is widened this will make it even harder to cross and will further separate Sefton Park from Otterspool Park.

Bus frequencies on this road have already been decreased due to congestion. As the plans only mitigate the traffic impact, rather than improve the current situation, they will not solve this problem. St. Michael's Station is very congested in the morning rush hour – queues frequently extend way beyond the entrance.

The roads within the development will be unadopted but built to adoption standards. How will the maintenance regime ensure they stick to this standard in the long-term? We already have well-known problems with this issue (for example around Sefton Park) placing demands on council budgets and image.

The Report notes that none of the site is within a Zone Of Opportunity. It says part of the application site lies within the HMRI. It is very difficult to understand how any part of an HMRI can be within Undeveloped Coastline and Green Wedge land.

In addition we are very concerned that the "Developed Core" area is labelled misleadingly on their plans. While the site of the Dome and the go-cart track are clearly 'previously developed', it is entirely inappropriate to include the officially designated Undeveloped Coastline and riverside bund within this designation.

- PPS3 sets a government objective to deliver mixed, sustainable communities. It will be patently impossible for this scheme to do that given the constraints of the site.

The Report says that the flatted development (1 and 2 bedroom mainly) is likely to appeal to small households of singles and couples. It is equally likely to appeal to buy-to-let investors who may either leave properties empty [as many are already eg.35% of city centre flats] or may let them to young, single people, students etc.

The lifestyle aspirations of these people may well be very different from the other possible market of older or retired couples and second home purchasers.

Only a small proportion of these people are likely to wish to make a long-term investment in this area. For instance, young couples planning families will need to move out.

The community will be the opposite of sustainable. Management of such a "zone of transition" will present problems for the future.

So are these properties needed? Will they negatively impact on local housing markets - particularly in the nearby ZOOs?

- The Report makes quite clear, on the basis of current estimates, that the City can meet all but 185 dwellings of its overall provision to 2016 without granting permission for any further developments.

The Report states that it can be expected that the housing requirement will be revised upwards and anyway PPS3 places emphasis on local planning authorities to plan for up to 15 years ahead.

The current UDP and housing strategies are already more than capable of meeting all likely future needs. Building new properties on this site can only lead to over-supply, particularly of apartments, to high vacancy rates within this site and nearby ZOOs and so the restriction of development in areas currently designated for development, going well into the future.

It is unsafe to give outline planning permission for such a large number of homes before the RSS Consultation is even completed. As noted above, there is already oversupply within the market for smaller apartments.

.../continued

## Plan Contradicts City Housing Policy(continued)

The Report says this scheme provides certainty of supply over the longer term (see Page 118).

To use this as a justification looks almost like bending over backwards in support of the applicants. National guidance is designed to tackle two very different issues which are undersupply of housing in much of the South of England and housing market failure in parts of the North of England.

HMRIs and ZOOs exist in Northern urban areas to tackle housing market failure and aim to prevent oversupply by targeting house building within vulnerable areas. There is no danger whatsoever of undersupply of flats even to 20 years in the future in Liverpool. And there are massive schemes already in the pipeline within ZOOs in Liverpool.

We recognise that the “Developed Core” application is ‘Outline Only’ but have noted above our concern about massing and scale of the finger development.

The design of the Park is not good enough to justify Full Planning Permission. It lacks distinctiveness.

Why has there been no design competition to design a nature gardens?

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- **City Council website states that the Dome is not in an HMRI so which part of the site is?**
- **The “Developed Core” area is labelled misleadingly in the Report. While the site of the Dome and the go-cart track are clearly previously developed, it is entirely inappropriate to include the officially designated Undeveloped Coastline and riverside bund within this designation**



Mr. S Clark  
Regeneration, Planning and Building Control  
Municipal Buildings  
Dale Street  
Liverpool  
L2 2DH

Dear Mr Clark

Objection to Planning Application ref 060/3442  
(former Liverpool Garden Festival Site, Riverside Drive, L17)

I object to the above planning application on the following grounds:

1. Damage to Green Wedge

The proposed development of 1,374 dwellings plus ancillary services is on land designated in the Unitary Development Plan as Green Wedge to be used for recreational and wildlife purposes only. It borders the Mersey estuary which is by far the most important environmental asset in Liverpool, of designated international importance for wildlife. It also builds upon the most attractive area of undeveloped coastline close to the centre of Liverpool. The ugly and badly designed "finger development" damages the views along the Prom. In addition, the management plans for the site will severely damage existing wildlife; in particular, excessive tree felling and damage to the grasslands. Lancashire Wildlife Trust believes the whole site should be regarded as of Site of Nature Conservation Value status for planning purposes.

2. Disturbance of the Landfill and Hazardous Materials

Any large scale development of this site involves extensive disturbance of a former municipal tip containing unknown amounts of toxic and hazardous material. Its disturbance will cause serious danger to the health and safety of the site workers, the people who will eventually live there and everybody who lives near by. The developers' plans to deal with this issue are grossly insufficient. A full scale Health Impact Assessment is required.

3. Traffic Impact

Riverside Drive already suffers severe traffic congestion for long periods of the day. Contrary to the developers' claims many households are bound to want one or more cars. This will lead to a substantial increase in traffic, causing more queues and tailbacks and a serious risk of gridlock, for instance at the Jericho Lane junction. The developers' proposals to tackle this are totally inadequate.

4. Housing

The Garden festival Site is not within a designated Housing Market Renewal area and therefore the level and type of housing development proposed in this area is contrary to planning and development policy.

Yours sincerely

Date

## About The Garden Festival Site

The Liverpool Garden Festival Site covers some 88 acres next to the river about 2½ miles south of Liverpool city centre.

The riverside promenade provides uninterrupted pedestrian and cycling access to the Garden Festival Site from the Albert Dock.

Walking (or cycling) from the Pier Head up to the Garden Festival Site the promenade is flat as a pancake and after the Albert Dock (and the splendid new Liverpool Arena) the walkway is something of a boring riverside pavement directly fronted by housing or industrial properties.

However after 2½ miles the Garden Festival Site provides an extraordinary “green” break on the promenade – and it is a truly magnificent break - with 40-metre high hills and a cleverly-landscaped woodland which combines at least 15 varieties of trees.

This wonderful landscaped woodland stretches without interruption for over ½ mile along the promenade.

The hills at the Garden Festival Site are man-made enterprises designed to calm down the usual Merseyside breezes and storms. Apparently at Beaufort Force 6\* the hills reduce the wind by about 45%. This is one of the reasons why these woods have such an unusually welcoming micro-climate and why they attract so much wildlife – more than 100 species of birds visit the woods according to local eco-experts. This is what turns ‘a boring riverside pavement’ into one of the best places to walk and talk (and see and smell and just enjoy living) in Liverpool.

The woods at the Garden Festival Site were planted as saplings in 1984 to provide the backdrop to the display gardens, water features and the large Festival Hall at Liverpool’s International Garden Festival of 1984. Altogether some 250,000 trees and shrubs were planted – plus 50,000 bluebells.

Schoolchildren were given a special role in building and planting the site – and there is a whole generation of Liverpudlians who had a hand in creating the ‘woodland on the waterfront.’

The Garden Festival Site was Britain’s first high-profile attempt to use nature to transform deadbeat industrial dereliction into the landscape for the ‘new economy’. It was planted directly on top of one of Liverpool’s landfill sites which in itself lay on top of very contaminated land from a previous oil jetty.

Beneath today’s trees and thriving wildlife lies some 6½ million tons of all sorts of toxic waste (asbestos and all the nasties that you can imagine) – thankfully capped by a thick layer of clay.

The landscape looks so natural (as if it has always been there) because it was made to look that way: ‘specimen’ trees planted in 1984 were already 30 foot high – and they were planted in a special ‘metre deep’ of top soil to get them going; lesser trees and shrubs had to do with 45 cms or about 18 inches of soil; but even the grass areas got 15cms or about 6 inches of real soil to grow in. Altogether some 4 million tons of top soil was imported to the site.

- The woodland consists of a more than 15 varieties of native or naturalized trees including: alder, beech, hazel, limes, maples, English oak, holm oak, Turkey oak, and American oak, rowan, Scots pine, poplars, silver birch, whitebeam, and willows.
- More than 30 species of birds are presently breeding in the woodland at the Garden Festival Site including: blackbird, blackcap, bullfinch, carrion crow, chaffinch, chiffchaff, collared dove, dunnock, goldcrest, goldfinch, great spotted woodpecker, jay, linnets, 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.
- Three grassland species of birds - bunting, skylark and meadow pipit - 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. Species which have bred in recent years include Tawny Owl, Lesser Whitethroat, Lapwing, Grey Partridge and Lesser Redpoll.

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\*Beaufort Force 6 = “Strong Breeze. Large branches in motion; whistling heard in telegraph wires; umbrellas used with difficulty!”