

BRIEFING NOTE: WINTERLEY LANE BURIAL GROUND

1. Background

Over a period of years, huge tonnages of material were imported to the site off Winterley Lane, and bordered by canal. The site operators and owners, Aldridge Construction Engineering and Dooceys, were given planning permission, initially to fill one limestone shaft, then for eighteen which they said they had found.

They then created the moon landscape that you now see, and the section of the lane between the canal bridge and the Royal Oak was seriously damaged: it now attracts huge amounts of fly-tipping, no doubt in part because it is next to what is now a huge tip, with only a handful of limestone shafts filled.

2. The 'Natural Burial Ground' wins Approval

In late 2017, the agents for the site owners and operators started discussing with Council officers a proposal to complete the infilling, then create a burial ground.

To improve their chances of an approval, they held off submitting an application until the Government changed green belt rules, which now say that burial grounds CAN be approved in green belt, where, until recently, developers would need to have proved exceptional circumstances to have any chance of getting approval.

The hugely controversial proposal came to the Council's Planning Committee on 1st November last year, and was approved by 7 votes to 6. This established the principle of a burial ground on the site, with four years to complete the infilling of the remaining limestone shafts, and up to three to develop the burial ground.

The approval was for one burial per week for up to 6,000 burials on the site - a total nonsense which could never stack up economically.

3. The Developers apply to change the Conditions

The developers lost no time in applying to vary the conditions, and on 18 January, a notification inviting people's view was published by Walsall Council.

The proposal is to vary the condition limiting burials to one per week to two per day, to take place between 10am and 3pm with a 90 minute interval between services: this would increase the number of burials from 50 a year to up to 720.

The environmental, community and highways impacts of what is already there, and what is now proposed, are huge and seriously damaging, and it is more than likely that, should the developers get approval for the vastly increased number of burials, they will then be back for more variations to the current conditions to further increase the value of the land and attract burial ground operators.

4. IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE PROPOSAL, THIS IS HOW TO OBJECT

If you would like to object, you have only until next Thursday, 7 February, to do so. You can either do this by e-mail or by letter: quote application number 18/1693, Land at Winterley Lane, Rushall.

- **Email** -planning services@walsall.gov.uk
- **Letter** - address your letter of objection to: Development Management, The Civic Centre, Zone 2B, Darwall St., Walsall, WS1 1DG

You can either post it (but be quick!), or hand it in at Civic Centre reception and they will pass it on to the planning case officer, Stuart Crossen.

5. WHAT YOU MIGHT PUT IN YOUR OBJECTION

The case officer, in writing his report to Planning Committee, will only give consideration to *valid planning objections* to the application before committee.

So you CAN'T ...

- argue against the principle of a burial ground, because, courtesy of seven members of Planning Committee, the principle is now established;
- object for reasons that are nothing to do with planning, e.g., the possible effect on house values, the kinds of people that might want to make use of the site, it should be restored to grazing land, etc.

But you CAN object on grounds of ...

- the effects on the local environment, and what planners call 'amenity' - what the proposal would mean in terms of its impact on the quality of life of the local community;
- traffic/road safety/parking - can the lane take the number of vehicles predicted, and how do you control and accommodate the numbers anyway if they turn out to be much more than stated by the developer (who is likely to underestimate the impacts - he just wants his approval!)?

You're the expert! It's your community, your neighbourhood, so ... use your local knowledge, think about the impacts, and put it in writing by Thursday's deadline!

ANOTHER DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

7.00pm – 8.30 pm, Tuesday 12 February: Public Meeting at Radleys Primary School

Agenda: next steps in the campaign (eg: petitions; demonstration outside Council House; setting up a Friends' Group/community tidy-ups for Winterley Lane)