

The Donkey Field

The majority of the residents in Westwells are against the idea of an Industrial build, a massive data centre, on The Donkey Field. Over 1000 objections were submitted, so a big pat on the back for everyone who made the effort of having their voices heard!. 1000 objections is a huge number for Wiltshire Council to receive and now process. Residents clearly want to keep Industrial Buildings in the designated Hawthorn industrial area. They do not want an industrial estate right bang in the middle of a residential village

So now the planning review process is underway, with our objections and evidence being reviewed by the Wiltshire Council Planning Department. The decision could take a few months and might even be made by the Lead Planning Officer, Adam Madge, or go to the Strategic Planning Group. If it is the latter, then Neston Westwells Action Group (NWAG) will keep you all posted of the date, time and venue of the meeting.

As you know, anyone building in Westwells has to comply with some very strict design standards to preserve its historic village status. (There are houses in the village that date back to the 15th century.) Therefore, the building standards include the Strategic Local Plan, Wiltshire Design Guide, and the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan. These documents produce a coherent design philosophy for the village of Westwells. These are policies that are now adopted by, and woven into, the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

These guidelines emphasize things like building height limits, not higher than 2 stories and to avoid three stories. Bungalows also to be avoided in the older more historic areas. To use local limestone, and to have specific roof and window styles. Only to allow any additional large footprint buildings where these are hidden from view and well-integrated into the landscape. So clearly the Wiltshire Design Guide favours two-storey buildings, local stone materials, dark-coloured gable roofs, and casement windows. Large buildings are discouraged unless they are well integrated and hidden from view. The plans also specifically name Westwells in them, e.g. The "Land south of Westwells" situated in Area 20 of the Corsham Design Guide and is known as Westwells and Wadswick Green. The initial statement reads that Westwells is an old village to the south of Corsham. It confirms that Westwells is an old 'village' and so should be treated as one with particular reference to policies as contained in the adopted 'Wiltshire Core Strategy'.

In contrast to the above plans the proposed data centre design, is a 20 metre tall metal-clad Industrial Mausoleum. It does not meet any of these standards. It's seen as an inappropriate Industrial monstrosity in the village centre, raising concerns about inconsistent application of design codes for us local residents versus developers.

Many of us local residents have had to jump through hoops when applying to put on a conservatory or similar extension. Previous builders and developers have also had to consider these issues along with the local bats. The Donkey Field area is referred to as Green Infrastructure and the Batscape is an important area for some very rare bats, with woodlands and hedgerows serving as habitats for these endangered species. Surely the WCC planning Department cannot have one rule for residents and another for big business? Ark have totally disregarded all of the above Strategic

Policies when pushing to build in this small village. NWAG are at a loss as to understanding why Ark seem to believe that none of the development rules apply to them? Despite WC Planning Department letting them have **three** goes at improving their planning application over a period of 18 months, Ark have steadfastly refused to address the issues put to them by statutory bodies, for example, the Flood and the Traffic agencies. This follows on from the so called 'consultation process' when their agents declined to answer many of the issues put to them about light pollution, affecting the foraging of bats, plus noise and traffic violations (which are still ongoing from their five Data Centres in Hawthorn) but promised all would be well if we only let them do as they like and build here. This is the same approach they have applied to WC planning authorities. Their total disdain for both WC planners and residents is positively shocking! The proposed Industrial build is completely contrary to almost every design standard that the Council in conjunction with Corsham Town Council have agreed upon over several years. It is as if Ark looked through The Design Standards and considered how they could avoid complying with every single one of them. Again shocking!

Neston Westwells Action Group (NWAG)