

# The Future of Allestree Park Golf Course

## Please register your support to maintain the golf course

Derby City Council has recently announced the sale of Allestree Hall to a wedding venue operator. Although the new owner is supportive of a golf course as a background to this venture, he has not the experience or desire to take on the operation of the Allestree Park Golf Course. As such, DCC have stated their intention to close the course and return it to unmaintained parkland.

However, two alternative scenarios exist

The council are offering the opportunity for suitable parties to register “Expressions of Interest” in taking over the running of the course. This scenario is, however, unlikely as the sale of the hall effectively removes all the incumbent facilities required for operation of a golf course (customer point of contact, maintenance equipment sheds, clubhouse, kitchen, toilets) for which the council are offering no financial or planning support in the provision of alternatives.

The second scenario, and the purpose of this message, is the council could be persuaded, by public opinion, to continue to maintain the golf course and to provide the necessary facilities using a small proportion of the significant funds acquired from the sale of the hall and the associated maintenance burden removal (>£2.8m)

DCC are required to demonstrate they are following a process of due diligence. To this end they have opened up a public consultation process to establish the public’s opinion on the future of the golf course and we would like to canvass as much public opinion as possible in support of continuation of the golf course.

The link to the consultation is:

<https://derbycitycouncil.researchfeedback.net/wh/s.asp?k=157139435342>

The majority of the consultation process is a box ticking exercise; however, there is also the opportunity to provide your comments. You probably have your own thoughts on this but we have included here a few points you may wish to consider.

### History

It should come as no surprise when Allestree Park Golf Course is described as “one of the most picturesque municipal courses in the Midlands” as the original course was designed in 1930 by none other than the “master of golf course design” Harry S. Colt (Portrush, Sunningdale, Woodhall Spa, Wentworth etc etc). It is interesting that a building can be afforded listed status protection based on age and design whereas a golf course of equal merit can be considered as disposable.

Allestree Park Golf Club may also claim a modicum of local historical significance. The original club was founded in 1930 as the Derbyshire Golf Club. Following closure during WWII, the club reformed in 1948 as APGC and was instrumental in the formation of the still current Derbyshire Golf Union.

### Usage

A high proportion of amateur golfers, and Derbyshire is no exception, can trace the commencement of their golfing careers to that first knock about on the local municipal course with a group of mates. The opportunity for novices to gain an introduction to the

game is only achievable for most through municipal courses as they offer affordable pay & play without the perceived elitism of private courses.

Despite the council's claim that the sport of golf is on the decline, the number of rounds played on Allestree Park is projected to be 18,000 rounds this year, in excess of 30% increase over the previous 2 years, whilst the number of rounds played at Sinfin golf course has also increased by 15% over the same period. These figures demonstrates that there is a significant demand for affordable golf in Derby city.

The council has determined that 35,000 rounds per year is a more financially sustainable usage rate for a public course. This "business model" represents the somewhat challenging target of filling 50% of all tee times over the whole year (average 8 hours of start times a day, 7 days a week, 10 minute tee times, 4 golfers per tee).

### **Costs**

The council claim that Allestree Park Golf Course is a burden to the city taxpayer to the value of £116K for the 2018/19 season (previous year's burden range between £43K to £98K). However, their accounting practices include the cost of 3 full time ground maintenance persons at £127K/year whereas the reality is one part-time groundsman is employed to cut grass and rake bunkers twice a week in summer and hardly at all in winter. There is no way that DCC will save £116K a year by closing the golf course.

The council also claim that the cost of providing new facilities to operate the golf course is prohibitive at £1m to £1½m. This number is considered to be wildly overstated; a more realistic cost being around £½m mark, or put another way, a small proportion of the cash income and maintenance burden offload associated with the sale of the hall.

### **Final Points**

A large percentage of visitors to Allestree Park have no interest in playing golf but make the effort to visit the park for an enjoyable walk with their families and dogs whilst appreciating the attractive landscape afforded by the course itself. It is unlikely to present an appealing proposition if returned to unmaintained parkland waste.

Should DCC get their way be allowed to let this beautiful and historic golf course revert to scrubland, how long will it be before the whole park deteriorates into a no go zone for the average law abiding member of public. DCC make great pains to point out that the site lies within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site "Buffer Zone" and is identified as an Archaeological and Ecologically sensitive location but appear willing to allow it to degenerate into a focus for anti-social activities and a fly tipper's paradise.

There have already been some highly impassioned and intensely supported petitions raised by concerned members of the public, however the only official means of registering comments is the public consultation process. The council are officially obliged to recognise the "voice of the public" through this process and as such we request as many people as possible log on to this web site and register their support for maintaining Allestree Park as a viable golf course.

We would also ask you to forward this message on to as many other like-minded people as you can think of as this is the best means of advertising the process. Be assured, your support is greatly appreciated by both golfers and non-golfers alike.

Many thanks

Alan Maguire (chairman APGC)