

FAO : All Derby City Councillors

[contact@saveallestreegolfcourse.co.uk](mailto:contact@saveallestreegolfcourse.co.uk)

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Dear Councillors,

### **OPEN LETTER TO ALL DERBY CITY COUNCIL COUNCILLORS – FORMER ALLESTREE PARK GOLF COURSE**

I am writing to you on behalf of the group campaigning to place the operation of Allestree Park Golf Course out to tender again.

Please find attached briefing note and may I respectfully direct you to our campaign website at <http://www.saveallestreegolfcourse.co.uk>

Most of Derby City Council parks have voluntary groups acting as Friends. We are looking to become a Friend of Allestree Park Golf Course.

None of our group have commercial interests in running this golf course. Our common theme is that we all started our golfing journey at this venue, and we want others to have then same chances the game has given us over the years.

We have a range of golf industry specific talents that can provide the strategic direction and support to ensure this special course is run to the benefit of all.

Even Derby City Council's own report to Council in September 2019 acknowledged that having no professional and a fragmented approach to its management at the venue was a major problem. We can help as we have a PGA professional within our group.

#### **There have been mistakes made within this process.**

A failure to recognise that Derby City Council hold a valuable heritage golf course within its assets since 1948 is a mistake. This was compounded by the decision to fail to market the golf course and Hall adequately in areas likely to have the funds for redevelopment of both together.

There needs to be a contingency to allow for commercial difficulties and delays in the redevelopment of the Hall in respect of the Golf course.

Losing the option of a Harry S Colt deigned golf course attached as part of the sale devalues its potential value massively.

The current position of abandoning the golf course to die is almost at a point of no return. Without maintenance, it will require substantial funds to reinstate it. We are at a critical time in its 90 years of life.

There is an application pending to Historic England, results awaited in March or April 2021.

If they declare Allestree Park to be the first and only golf course with a Designated Historic Landscape in the UK what contingency exists to pay for this to occur? Reinstatement costs would be high, both commercially and reputationally.

#### **Simply avoid that issue.**

Reinstate a maintenance program **immediately** to ensure that the course is available for play when lockdown is eased.

Run the course in a paired down manner. Use the existing facilities until the Hall building works interfere, then run it from a laptop in a mobile facility with online booking and payment whilst permanent facilities are developed. Totally COVID-19 compliant and safe. The only cost to the Council is the maintenance work undertaken by your staff who already know the course.



This is the mobile facility at the 5-star rated Manor Course in Wiltshire where green fees are £70 per person.

They run the golf course for members and guests from this Air Stream caravan positioned by the practice green, also serving drinks and snacks. Initially, this was a COVID-19 safety measure but was so popular and easy to manage that it was retained without degrading the service to those playing this Peter Alliss designed course.

These facilities would be available to all users of Allestree Park.

We can offer support from award winning agronomists who appreciate Colt designs and their environmental impact.

We can market and promote the facility. No group loses out. We could work in partnership with the excellent Local Nature Reserve and its friends to ensure our joint environmental goals are met.

Derby City Council gain an affordable, accessible, fully inclusive to all ages, sporting facility that will generate income to pay for its own upkeep.

Golf is scientifically proven to have health and well-being benefits to those involved and is multi-generational in its nature.

Ensuring it is still affordable will allow customers to play from private clubs who will be unable to cope with demand from the members when lockdown is eased. They will happily pay to play at such a venue especially now it has become famous and better appreciated.

If necessary, build in a period for SMART review of the process. We contend that this venue can be run at a cost neutral level by Derby City Council, especially as demand for golf is about to increase massively. We can provide commercial and historical analysis supporting this contention.

### **Please ACT NOW before the course dies**

Reinstate the maintenance of the course immediately in readiness for the post lock down demand for golf resulting from the Government announcement that sporting facilities will reopen on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

This ten-minute video can be found on our web site <https://youtu.be/KEx5zyauYSI>. It illustrates graphically the impact of the course closure on the citizens of Derby and surrounds.

**Let's do the right thing for Derby** and revitalise an historic golf course, reinstating a facility that everyone of any age can use post pandemic in an affordable, accessible way. Generating income by its continued use.

Yours faithfully,



Andrew Picken  
On behalf of the campaign to save Allestree Park Golf Course

## Our Objective – Put Operation of the Course Out to Tender Again

Reopen the golf course to profit from the post lockdown golf boom and undertake a tender process, marketed through appropriate industry channels, where the narrative of this important historic golf course is made available to bidders.

We have no commercial interest in the venue other than owing a life playing golf to the chance to enter the game through playing at Allestree Park.

We have a PGA Professional in our group and can provide support to Derby City Council to find a suitable partner who will operate it effectively.

We just want to ensure it is available for future generations and not lost forever.

## Allestree Park Golf Course - An Important Public Facility

This golf course is special and deserves to be recognised, nurtured, and preserved for future generations. Allestree Park refutes the allegation that golf is elitist.

Its main benefit is that it is accessible to all, beginner or professional. All ages and genders are challenged because its design qualities ensure an equal level of pleasure is achieved no matter what the standard of player. It is affordable to those who cannot meet the prices charged by local private clubs, the majority of which are fully subscribed anyway.

## Allestree Park Golf Course - A Valuable Council Asset with an Amazing History

The designer of the golf course in 1930 is Harry S Colt who is acknowledged to be one of the greatest and most influential course architects in history. His global influence and empathy with the landscape led to a change in methods of construction and maintenance that are still followed today.

Colt has 320 designs globally. Only 3 are not in private hands. **Allestree Park is one of those 3.** Colt designed courses are host to the most prestigious golf tournament in the world **The Open Championship**. Colts design essays and books set the standard for all modern golf architecture and his empathy with the environment set a new and welcome standard. His influence was global as he had several business partners whom he mentored as they took on his ideas and concepts. He is the world's most influential golf course architect.



Colt created recognised styles of golf holes including those with an “heroic” carry. Only one such design over water is known to be a Colt design.

We have press reports, aerial photographs and even postcards of this 1930 golfing tourist attraction, in play in Derby.

**It was in play at Allestree Park from 1930.**

## Allestree Park Golf Course – An Early Example of a Country Club

The 1930 **Derbyshire Golf Club** golf course was designed as an intrinsic part of the development of housing around the park that developed Allestree from a rural village. The concept of the “golf and housing estate” (Country Club) development started in the UK but then grew very popular in the US, Australia and Japan as it was easier to complete due to different planning law requirements. The first such resort type development was by Colt at **St Georges Hill** near London (1913). Colt built mixed use developments (Golf and Housing estates) at **Effingham** in Surrey (1927-8) and **Ham Manor**, near Worthing in Sussex. The **Wentworth** Estate included 2 of the 3 courses being built to Colt designs. (These golf courses were sold in 2014 for £135 million pounds.)

## Allestree Park Golf Course - Culturally Significant to Derby

Historic England have accepted an application for Allestree Park to be the first golf course in the UK registered as a **Designated Historic Landscape**. The application has been submitted as researchers have illustrated that **Allestree Park** was at the forefront of golf design globally in the early 1930's. Allestree Hall is intrinsically linked to the Evans family (Darley Abbey Mills) and the Johnson family (Wire works) so is itself linked to the industrial revolution that was created in the Derwent Valley. The above information supports the WHS with UNESCO. Result of application expected in March/April 2021.

## Allestree Park Golf Course – A Hidden Gem Confirmed by Experts

Our historical research has been supported by a team of globally recognised architects and golf historians. All have worked with the PGA, USPGA and the R&A. This team of experts includes the only person in the history of the world to have had active design input into all 13 Open venues in the UK. All are supportive of the material submitted to Historic England.

## Allestree Park Golf Course – A Huge Impact on the Local Community

- Petition against closure has over **25,000 signatures**
- Social media impressions to over **1 million**
- Coverage by BBC TV and local Radio.

We have supporters considering standing a single issue candidate on this issue in the forthcoming virtual elections.

Closure of the golf course will lead to the loss of a facility used by over 47,740 people since 2017 all paying for that service. Many of those attracted by the affordable prices charged.

The only beneficiary of the course closing is a single commercial wedding venue developer. We are unclear as to how this complies with the diversity strategy of Derby City Council

## Allestree Park Golf Course – Why Should the Course Reopen?

We are campaigning for Derby City Council to reopen the course in time for the easing of lockdown to profit from the inevitable boom in the sport. Once it has been reopened this will allow for a tender process to take place that accurately reflects the value of the Allestree Park Golf Course and allow Derby City Council to maximise its commercial value.

Demand for municipal golf has increased hugely in recent times. For example, in the last 3 months in Scotland it has increased 260%. History generally repeats itself, the impact of the Spanish Flu pandemic in 1920 led to a massive increase in demand in the following 10 years for courses and golf globally.

**This same pattern is currently being repeated in the UK and Worldwide. This is absolutely the worst time commercially to close a golf course.**

Golf is an ideal sport for outside exercise in a social and fully inclusive manner. It can be played by all ages and skill levels.

Please review Allestree Park green fees from December 2019 against those taken in December 2020, we anticipate this will show an increase in revenue of 300%. This is despite awful weather conditions and a pandemic. The demand and interest for the preservation of the course exists. Local private clubs cannot cope with the demand from membership as reduced daylight hours and two ball play restrictions bite into the opportunities for play. There is a massive demand and Derby City Council have a facility ready and available for immediate use.

Golf has a scientifically proven benefit from a well-being and mental health viewpoint. It has even been discussed as being made available through the NHS in place of medication. This is not a new idea. Dr Alister Mackenzie, one of Colts business partners who designed **Augusta National** the home of The Masters in the USA, was doing this when still in medical practice at Leeds in 1910!

## Allestree Park Golf Course – It Should Not be Allowed to Die

Our research has added considerable value to a council asset. We have several industry experts who are offering to support the Council to maximise the undoubted potential that exists in maintaining this as an active and thriving golf course after 90 years. This mistake cannot be allowed to go unrectified as it affects so many detrimentally.

There was a major flaw in the tender process as the history of the course was not reflected in the material used to advertise its availability, which could have a tremendous commercial value to anyone bidding to operate the course. This restricted it being accessible to many who would seek to develop both course and Hall together. This mistake cannot be allowed to go unrectified as it affects so many detrimentally.

Circumstances affecting the validity of the initial reports and recommendations have changed so much that this decision must be revisited to ensure the best result for the citizens of Derby, and beyond who will happily pay to use the facility because of its quality, heritage, and affordability.