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8th October 2012

David Armstrong MA
Head of Children's Services WBC
Hamilton building
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RECEIVED
- 8 OCT 2012

Dear David

Re Wirral Youth Zone

I am writing to you as the circuit steward with responsibility for property, for the Methodist Church on the Wirral. This letter is in response to the recent meeting you held with the Rev Blair Kirkby and some of the members from Charing Cross Methodist Church, and follows your recent e-mail note to us sent by Dawn Tolcher.

Firstly may I say how surprised and disappointed we are by the decision that you have taken to proceed with the Youth Zone on Fire Station land only; excluding our offer, in principle, to make available the land on which Charing Cross Methodist Church and Youth Centre currently stands. Clearly however the Local Authority are entitled to develop the Youth Zone in the way you feel is best for the young people Birkenhead.

There are however some misconceptions and inaccuracies in the note you sent to us and I feel that these need to be clarified. My comments therefore initially follow the same order as your own note.

The council land title

From my own investigations we (The church) are aware and indeed told your representatives that there were pieces of land on the corner which were of indeterminate ownership. We have always been under the impression however that this corner of land could remain part of the pavement by setting back slightly the entrance to the Youth Zone

The church land

The only land under church control which is restricted in any way is that occupied by the current youth club which is on Local Authority Freehold Land, on a peppercorn lease to the church, and it is the Local Authority themselves who included the restriction you mention in the lease. There is no reason at all therefore why this clause cannot be

released on the assumption that this land reverts to the local authority and is developed as part of the Youth Zone

Scottish Power

Our own deeds show clearly the ownership of the substation, and I acknowledge this would need to be moved. It would be astonishing however if a new power supply was not required for the fire station or Youth Zone and the cost of dealing with this I do not think would be exorbitant as part of the overall development of the scheme.

Bright Street

If the church land is developed as part of the Youth Zone no objection will be raised on our part to the closing Bright Street. If as you indicate the fire station own half the width of this road, and the church buildings on the other side could claim title to their side of the road, it seems to me between the fire service and the church, from what you have said, Bright Street is controlled by 2 parties who are committed to developing the Youth Zone and therefore there would not be any objection to closure.

As far as any services under the road are concerned I acknowledge there could be a possible problem but this would depend on how the Youth Zone itself was designed. This could be done in such a way that Bright Street becomes part of the external facilities to the Youth Zone rather than be under the main building, thus leaving access in an emergency to these underground services. It would however be highly unusual developing any scheme of this type on reclaimed land if services did not require moving, and in the overall cost of things, I do not believe this would be a significant cost.

Youth club on the present site

The youth club leader at Charing Cross is a member of your staff and clearly that youth club is not going to continue if and when a new Youth Zone opens. If staff are transferred to the new Youth Zone we are left with a building and a 5 aside pitch which is of no use whatsoever to the church. We have always assumed this would be part of the external facilities of the Youth Zone. If this is not going to be the case a semi derelict building is going to be left adjacent to the Youth Zone which will be a hazard and an eye sore for the foreseeable future.

Condition of church buildings

As I have said in the meetings we have held with you, the church buildings are no longer fit for purpose and need a considerable amount of money spending on them if they are to continue in use. The church simply does not have this money and indeed it would be cheaper to demolish and rebuild than it would to bring the existing buildings (the church itself, and the youth club buildings) up to a decent standard. It is therefore envisaged that whatever happens with the Youth Zone the church will probably have to relocate in the not too distant future.

It was always felt that smaller premises within the Youth Zone for church use would have been a good solution, however it is acknowledged that we have not been able to agree so far on the amount of space that the church would need, and the youth zone could provide, within a new building.

In good faith representatives of the Methodist church have been part of the steering group for the Youth Zone always assuming that the existing church land, including the youth club would become a part of this project. The church acknowledge that no commitments were

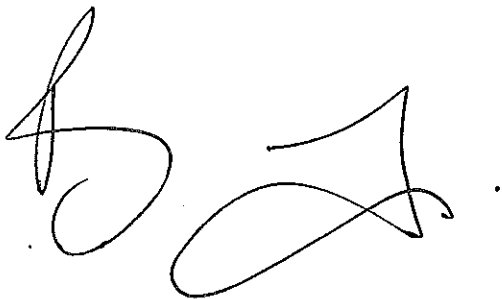
given, we do feel however that to leave the church premises out of this project will bring other problems which will act as a deterrent, and will leave a blighted piece of land next to a project which should be the pride and joy of all young people on the Wirral.

It is not clear at the moment who has made this decision, officers of the Council, or has this been discussed at a council meeting, thus becoming the council's policy for development of the Youth Zone? We would respectfully request however that if this matter has not yet been before the council for their approval the views of the Methodist Church are made known to them before any decision is finalised.

If it would be helpful to discuss this matter further no doubt you will let me know.

In view of his interest in this project I am sending a copy of this letter to Frank Field.

kindest regards.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. A.', written in a cursive style.