

MILTON MATTERS

Issue No. 76

MILTON NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM Oct 2023



Milton Park 100 Year Anniversary – July 2023

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Harbour Sea Defences
Update St James Planning Application & Appeal
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A Busy Year

At our Open Forum meeting in March, Janice Burkinshaw stepped down as chair of the Milton Forum after nearly 30 years – see our thank you to Janice later in this issue. We also heard from the Neighbourhood Plan team, Switched on Portsmouth and our new warden for Milton Common – it was great to hear of so much wildlife on what many of us can remember as the council tip.

Since then we have had the St James Inquiry and much effort to stop Aquind – more on both of those in this issue, though as we go to press we hear we have our 5th Secretary of State in position since Aquind started – so there is a big fear that she will rely heavily on ‘experts’ and civil servants as was the case at St James which, to put it nicely, is very worrying.

We have had our 20th Picnic on the Green and our 1st centenary celebration of Milton Park, planning is already underway for next years Picnic on the Green which we hope to be bigger and better, but we are having a rest before starting on the next Milton Park Centenary event..... 😊

If you attended any of these events, we do hope you enjoyed them and if you would like to get involved do come along and talk to us, we always need more help whether it just be ‘bright ideas over coffee’ or ‘helping on the day’.

We are now planning our Open Forum in October – that should be interesting with updates on plans for Langstone Campus and the city sea defences among others plus if you have little ones, do come along to the Halloween Trail starting at the Village Hall this year and hopefully running through to ‘our other / new hall’ in Bransbury park (more on that in the next issue).

And finally, put Baffins Christmas Market in your diary if you fancy a day out ‘up North’!

Martin Silman, Chair

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ST JAMES INQUIRY DECISION

The Appeal to the Planning Inspectorate to grant planning consent for the conversion of the Hospital into 151 Flats/Apartments and 58 new houses was successful. The Green Space below, known as “Matron’s Garden”, will be built over with three houses and sixteen car-spaces.

Milton Forum have always accepted the Hospital’s conversion, even if imperfect. The awful cubist-style housing is totally wrong. The loss of “Matron’s Garden” is unforgivable.



As well as the Forum (who attended the Inquiry process from start to finish), several Milton residents and our Ward Councillors all spoke at the hearing, as did the Portsmouth North MP. The dismissal of their views, and those of the wider community, together with the disregard of the Milton Plan policies, is an insult to local democracy. The decision is a reactive response to a backward-looking scheme but more than that, it’s a real setback to progressing the Council’s “Greening” Agenda”.

Portsmouth has just 40% of the open/green space required under national standards. The Inspector chose the easy option of following the Officer’s recommendation to grant consent because the Council doesn’t have a clear supply of land to meet its 5-year housing target. The issue is we’re an over-developed Island City and they can’t. Without known sites being available, the Council isn’t able to force landowners to sell sites for housing and they can’t grow land, or reclaim land from the sea either: Tipner proves that.

Our advice in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan was to calculate need and demand to reach a figure.

That figure was then to be judged by reference to constraints such as infrastructure (highways is one but so is green infrastructure!). We concluded there wasn’t the capacity, we cannot understand why the Council’s Planners haven’t concluded likewise.

The Milton and Portsmouth Plan policies aim to retain and improve green and open spaces and to provide additional new space on development’s with over 50 new houses.

The Planning Inspector’s reasoning is that the “Garden” is private land and won’t be missed because it’s invisible from outside the Hospital. Both we and Cllr Hugh Mason, explained the public had enjoyed access for decades and the

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ST JAMES INQUIRY DECISION - 2

Council had included the Hospital as a public North/South through route for cyclists and pedestrians in their Active Travel Map. The Inspector's rationale for allowing the excessive parking levels, well above those in the Milton Plan, is that there are local facilities in Milton, and residents will be able to walk and cycle to them.

If the Hospital's residents aren't going to need them, then let's keep more green space. We argued traffic congestion was already excessive. The developer claimed otherwise. The Council thought the roads could cope. The Inspector was unable to disagree.

There's no Affordable Housing. The Council agreed with the developer they weren't viable. After deducting Milton Common Nature Reserve contribution costs (£1.9m); nitrate credits to offset Harbour pollution from housing (£958,000); recreational disturbance payments to mitigate nuisance to wildlife habitat in the Harbours/Solent; (£132,000); and new traffic lights at Locksway Rd (£825,000) to mitigate congestion, their profit margin was considered to be low. In any other scenario, except in the world of property development, the seller accepts a market price reflecting obligations and liabilities. Not so with today's politics of inflating land values for the benefit of landowners. The NHS were transferred the land from PCC under Post-War social reforms. They'd used the Hospital for over 70 years and could have sold/master-planned both phases of St James' coherently to produce a better scheme with more affordable housing but probably at a lower price.

The Forum had always maintained the NHS didn't comply with Gov't's Guidance in selling off sites with historic buildings which requires that price is not to be the overriding objective to avoid historic sites losing their identity through over-development. In this instance, and in spite of repeated questions from Stephen Morgan MP, this disposing Authority failed to be transparent leaving the Inspector to conclude "*There is nothing before me to demonstrate that the process followed was flawed or led to an unrealistic sales value being realised*".

Overall, this is a deplorable outcome serving nobody but those with a short-term financial interest.

The issue is that for all the political talk of localism, St James is a perfect example of what is wrong with the system. The Planning Inspectorate, based in Bristol made the final decision based on its interpretation of the 'National Planning Policy Framework', deciding between a Manchester based developer on one side and the local community on the other.

Membership now available at the Langstone Harbour Fishermen's Association (L.H.F.A.)

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ST JAMES INQUIRY DECISION - 3

In a more perfect world, the hundreds of local people who participated in the process would have had the loudest voice, but as it was, we had no voice. More weight was given to Planning Officers who took a different view on the local history; the importance of open-space to the Council's Public Health and "greening" objectives; the sentiments of local people and the fact they'd taken the time and effort to prepare an evidenced based Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan was endorsed by an Independent Examiner and other Officers within the Planning Authority as providing an acceptable alternative. Officers did not seem to value that the site had been open to the public since the 2nd World War or it had highly valued publicly accessible green space and a national cycling route promoted by the Council through the grounds.

It may make organisations more efficient if they use the best skills available, wherever they may reside and develop centres of excellence that others can call on – but if these groups do not listen to the people whose lives their decisions affect, they will continue to fail.

Milton has a community-led Plan. All Milton and Baffins Ward Councillors supported the Plan and opposed the scheme.

Sadly, this was 'PLANNING' done to Milton by those who don't live here."

Rod Bailey, Milton Neighbourhood Forum



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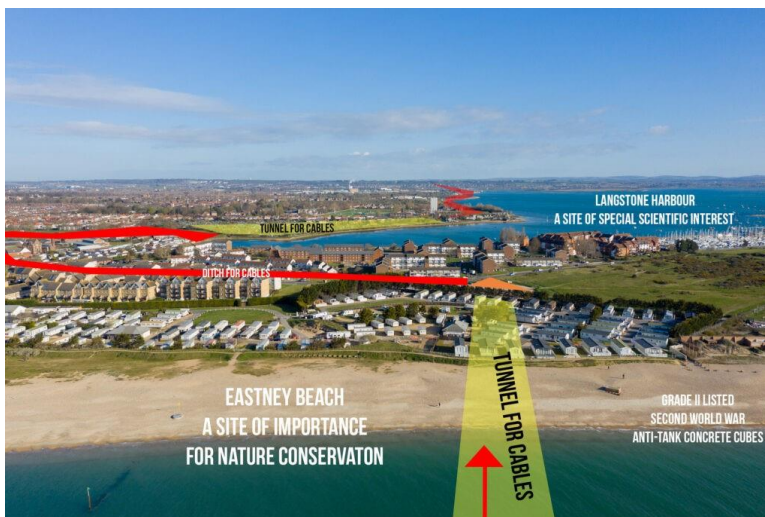
Aquind Interconnector Update

The decision to allow Aquind Ltd. to build the 2 Gigawatt electrical connection linking France to England (Aquind Interconnector), is in the hands of the Secretary of State at the new Energy Security and Net Zero (ESNZ) department. In May this year the latest documents were published on the planning inspectors' website. These documents, some 440 in total, are key to this decision. All interested parties had the opportunity, until late June, to study this new documentation and to respond to the Secretary of State.

"Let's Stop Aquind", our grassroots activist group founded in September 2020, would like to thank all of you who took the trouble to write your submissions objecting to this damaging project. The vast majority of the 440 documents recently published were written by you! Together we have massively obstructed this development. It is still undecided. There is still work to be done.

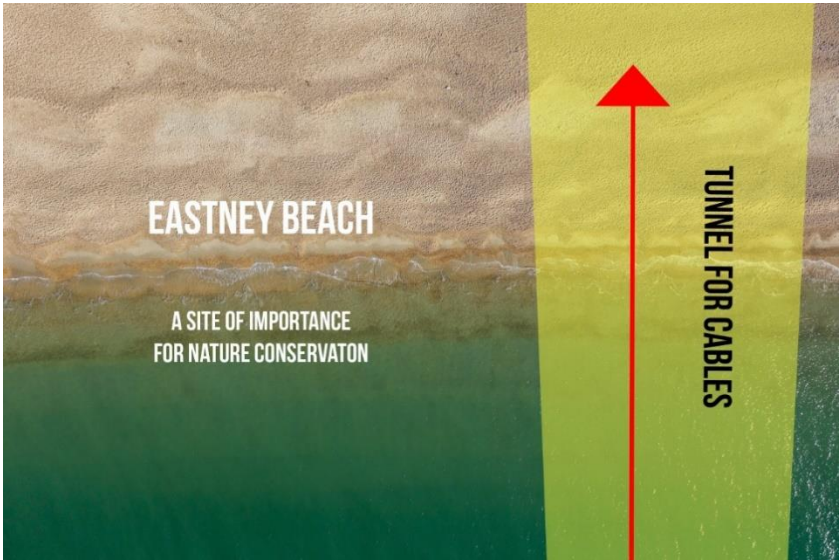
Both Portsmouth MPs, Portsmouth City Council and residents have expressed their greatest concerns and highlighted numerous issues which have been downplayed by Aquind.

The destruction to the marine environment, our green spaces, parks, the allotments, playing fields etc is untold. This project would mean nothing but destruction and damage to the city of Portsmouth and beyond. This is why Portsmouth City Council is strongly opposing this project and our valuable council tax money has been spent to fight this Project. All parties are against this Project and Let's Stop Aquind has over the past 3 years raised the issue repeatedly. This is why the previous SoS of the BEIS refused the Aquind Interconnector Project in January 2022.

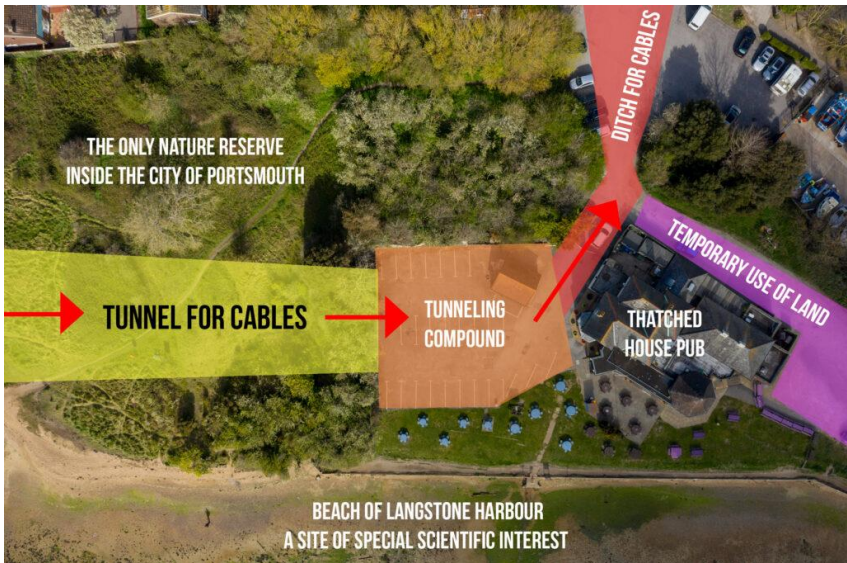


cont..

Impact of cable route on Eastney Beach – loss of Fort Cumberland car park and Grade II listed building, blight from development of two Optical Regeneration Stations, each up to 4m high for the proposed Fibre-Optic Communications network.



Impact of cable route on Milton Locks Nature Reserve, Langstone Harbour SSSI and (previous page) Bransbury Park public space and skate park.



Aquind Interconnector Update - 2

Aquind could and should have chosen a less damaging route from the very start of this ill-conceived project. It is incomprehensible for anyone to think this project was a good idea in the ripping apart and causing havoc to a densely populated island City and in the entire 13-mile route from Eastney on Portsea Island to Lovedean in the South Downs. The impact on the entire route to people's lives, the habitat, wildlife and traffic congestion will be devastating over a very long period of time.

The flythrough video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DcShkMOT_E) shows how homeowners, communities, sports enthusiasts, farmers, businesses and users of important public spaces such as Milton Locks nature reserve, Bransbury Park, Milton Common, Langstone Harbour SSSI and the South Downs would be affected by the Applicant's plans, either for years as the cables are laid or permanently from the blight caused by the buildings required.

Let's Stop Aquind has warned of the impacts this project would have during construction period, unknown consequences it could have for our habitats and ourselves during and after the construction.

The disturbance and damage to our local environment here in Portsmouth is shown below through a visualisation showing the route where either huge trenches have to be dug or Horizontal Drilling be applied. There are more photos available for the whole route up to Lovedean on our website: www.stopaquind.com





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The majority of this levy goes into the council budget but a small percentage (15% normally but 25% in Milton as we have a Neighbourhood Plan) can be spent locally on local projects.

The Neighbourhood Plan for Milton covers most of Milton and part of Baffins, so we have a say, along with ward councillors, on spend in both wards – and so far this year we have funded some shelving for the Baffins Pantry (foodbank) and a defibrillator outside the childrens home in Priory Crescent and have just agreed funding for a mural on the train shed in Bransbury Park.

Developments in St James Hospital will boost the CIL pot significantly, though there is already around £60,000 earmarked for projects in Milton and £50,000 for Baffins.

The big question is which projects should we focus upon / where should we spend – traffic improvement or facilities for children or something completely different? - do come along to the next forum meeting and tell us your thoughts – or contact us directly (full details on the back page).

Milton Calendar - 2023

Tue Oct 10th - Milton Open Forum, Christ Church, 239 Milton Road

Sat Oct 28th - Milton Halloween Trail, from Milton Village Hall to Eastney Community Centre

Sat Dec 2nd - Baffins Christmas Market, Tangier Road

Our picnic this year clashed with Portsmouth Pride so attendance was lower and many of our normal stalls and events popped up there rather than here – unfortunate planning on our part but it will not happen again.

It was also a very hot day – so much so that on the day Justin, the vet, very reluctantly had to cancel the dog show which is always popular and brings good attendance plus the Scouts had to pull out at the last moment as they did not have enough people to support and manage the climbing wall.

Sounds like a disaster doesn't it – but it was actually our 20th successive 'good weather' picnic (fingers crossed that 2024 makes it 21 in a row), attendance was good, we sold lots of tea, coffee and Annette's delicious home made cakes (we can only imagine her kitchen in the week before the event), the tombola was as popular as ever and as you can see, the kids loved the races as always.



The Pompey Pluckers entertained us again and Punch & Judy put on two completely different shows which were both really popular. Add in the bouncy castles and all of the stores ranging from The Hive to Milton Common, Cancer Research to Switched on Portsmouth – we hope there was something for everyone.

Oh, and did we mention the face painting, that had the biggest queues.

The event was opened by the Lord Mayor and The Lady Mayoress, there were no lost children, the first aid tent was unused and we only made a small overall loss on the event – so all in, it was a good day and a lovely way to celebrate the fact that we have a 'Green' at all, thanks to the actions of the Forum nearly 20 years ago.



Planning is well underway for next year – but please do tell us what would make it better for you / what would you like more of / what is missing?
Come along to the Open Forum and chat or send us an email (see back cover)

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Milton Neighbourhood Forum

It is 30 years since the Forum started in someone's front room with a small group of community minded individuals. At the time, many other forums existed but now Milton is the only area which still has an active Neighbourhood Forum. By 1994, one of those early members, Janice Burkinshaw had taken over as vice-chair and the rest, as they say, is history.

In September 1995, Janice edited and published issue number 1 of Milton Matters – black and white, just 10 pages, no adverts but a 'residents letters page' In that 1st issue she stated, "As Vice Chair I will be taking on the role of Chair until our next election/AGM and hope to keep residents well informed of local issues."

Well, Janice, you certainly did that! As editor of the 75 issues before this one and chair of the forum for 28 years, you have overseen and directed so much in the local area.

Not only did Janice edit and arrange printing of each of the 75 issues of Milton Matters, she ensured that it was distributed to all the homes, businesses and schools in Milton along with copies to those community organisations and councillors outside the area who needed to see it.

The 'Green' where we have our Picnic? Securing that as a community asset and preventing it being built upon was one of Janice's early successes with the Forum and the establishment of the annual Picnic on the Green not only provides fun and entertainment for local families, but it also ensures the status of the green continues to be recognised.

Keep Milton Green on Facebook? In the words of Kimberley (now Cllr.) Barrett, "Janice approached me and Martin to get something on social media set up at an open forum in 2014 to get as many people as possible in Milton aware of the proposed development at St James. I agreed to do it as I was pregnant at the time and said I would have all the time in the world to run it going forward! 🙄 Hopefully it will put to bed the age old 'Lib dems set it up' as my colleagues were not involved with it and it was Janice who asked us to get it set up."

Neighbourhood Plan? "Janice told me more than once, that a NP had been considered when they were initiated under "Localism" in 2011/12 because of threats to St James' and the proposals for a new Tesco's in Fratton Way. The absence of suitably knowledgeable Forum Members at the time, postponed any decision to start one. I attended an Open Forum in early 2014 and thought we "might" be able to do one: - Janice didn't waste any time encouraging me! Neighbourhood Plans can't be created without a recognised community body as in a Parish Council, or a Neighbourhood Forum. Although not on the Planning Forum, she was instrumental in helping it to fruition." Rod Bailey

Milton Neighbourhood Forum - 2

Starting the work to ensure St James Hospital Chapel was not lost to the community – that was Janice too. Then there is the Plaque at the hospital commemorating the American Soldiers who lost their lives due the Spanish Flu who were hospitalised at St. James during the war. Yes, Janice...

And the D-Day History Walk back in 2019, that was where Janice spotted my interest along with Paul Dockings expertise and before we knew it, we were editing a guide and a website and conducting guided walks around the area.

And did I mention the Halloween Trail (Janice was the lady with the PA encouraging the children – she did not just have the ideas and find the people, she definitely got involved too).

The list of achievements of the Milton Neighbourhood Forum over the past 30 years is extensive – I have many more examples, but space does not allow – and most agree that very little of any of this would have happened without Janice's leadership.

So, on behalf of the Forum and everyone in Milton, I would like to say, Janice Burkinshaw – THANK YOU – you have changed Milton and made it so much better and so many people have had a better experience because of the work you have done over so many years. You are an impossible act to follow...



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You do not have to be a member to enjoy any of the activities and trips but if you do join, you'll receive discounts and advance notification of trips and events & more! Please ask for details.

The new programme has just gone out to members for Winter 2023-24 & beyond and there's lots of goodies to enjoy! Below is a sample of trips, for the full programme, please phone or email the office! (NB. At the time of printing, these were new trips but some may now be sold out but we can add you to the waiting list if there's anything you're particularly interested in!)

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WARNERS CORTON VILLAGE, SUFFOLK 29/1-2/2/24 All £239 (NM £259)	BOOK OF MORMON LONDON SHOW (m) 23/2/24 All £65 (NM £69)
HAMILTON LONDON SHOW 29/2/24 (m) All £105 (NM £109)	THURSFORD CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR 27-29/11/24 All £289 (NM £309)
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Vinyasa Yoga	Beetle Drive (m)	Weight Watchers	Folk Band (m)	Iyenga Yoga		
Boxercise NEW!	Iyenga Yoga	Sisters in Song (m)	Children's Ballet			
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