

News



CAMPAIGNERS COME TOGETHER TO FIGHT CLOSURE OF BELOVED MUSEUM

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MORE than 150 campaigners gathered to show their support for Broxbourne Lowewood's Museum in a demonstration marking "just the beginning of a community campaign".

On Saturday, January 25, campaigners from The Friends of Lowewood Museum, the Hoddesdon Society and members of the public gathered outside the museum, housed in a Georgian building dating back to the 1750s, on the High Street, Yewlands, to demonstrate their opposition to Broxbourne Council's decision to close a "beloved local community venue". It was also the final chance for people to see the last day of the James Ward: Animal Painter exhibition.

The Friends of Lowewood Museum held a meeting on Tuesday, January 21, which was attended by almost 100 people and its petition to save the museum has reached nearly 3,000 signatures online and more than 400 signatures on paper.

The protest was held with just a few days notice and campaigners were said to be delighted with the turn out, especially in the cold weather.

Petition founder David Dent vowed: "It is just the beginning of this community campaign, we're not going away!"

The museum is not just home to nearly fifty thousand unique local exhibits, varying from archaeology, geology, costume, social history, art and photography, but is also the venue for many local arts events and its basement has happily housed the Lowewood Pottery Club for generations.

Janet Feet, a member of the Lowewood Pottery Club, said: "I'm really sad to learn that the council intend to close the museum.

"When I first moved to the area I didn't

know anyone and the pottery club introduced me to a joyful pastime but more importantly gave me a sense of belonging and place in the community.

"The arts clubs perform such an important social role, especially for older and more excluded members of the community, as well as with young people, and I just don't think the council have thought this through."

As well as their petition against the closure, which will be submitted to the council next month, Friends of Lowewood and the Hoddesdon Society are asking people who object to the closure to write to their local councillors requesting that the decision is discussed by the full council.

Broxbourne Council said at this time, they have nothing further to add, but previ-

ously explained that the decision to close the museum did not need to be made by full council, and such decisions rest with the council's cabinet, who voted unanimously on December 16.

They added that the financial and staffing resources required from the council far exceed those available or justifiable in the current economic climate to continue to operate the museum, which currently costs the local tax payer over £100,000 a year, and it was agreed that Lowewood Museum will close to the public on June 30.

To sign the petition visit <https://www.change.org/p/broxbourne-borough-council-save-lowewood-museum-hoddesdon-from-closure-at-the-end-of-june-2020>



Petition founder David Dent

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Residents raise concerns over 'deathtrap' road plan

CONCERNS over plans previously branded a "deathtrap" for a new access route to and from the A10 in Buntingford have been presented to Hertfordshire Highways.

Housebuilder Redrow was granted planning permission to close the current access route from Ermine Street to the A10 as part of plans to deliver the newly built residential development The Maples. Changes would see a new access and exit built through the residential Neale Drive, which would need to accommodate larger vehicles, prompting residents to launch a petition due to safety fears.

Last week North East Herts MP Oliver Heald and County Councillor Jeff Jones took residents Bill Osborne and Pannie Hopper to meet Hertfordshire Highways' Mark Youngman to discuss access to The Maples and the plan to stop at Ermine Street, at the Royston end, so that there is just one access to north Buntingford via Neale Drive.

It is understood that Mr Youngman agreed to discuss the matter with East

Herts District Council and Redrow, but a major planning application, a road survey and considerable planning issues would be required, not to open Neale Drive to traffic. This is because it had been an essential planning condition to spread traffic through the town.

However, a proposal to keep Ermine Street open is thought to be more realistic, with it possible for Hertfordshire County Council to consider any proposals for traffic restrictions in Neale Drive.

Mr Heald said: "This was a constructive meeting and we put the case forward strongly. The proposal to keep two accesses to north Buntingford and then consider traffic restrictions on Neale Drive seems more realistic than not to open Neale Drive at all.

"I am now going to have meetings with the district council planners and also discuss the matter with Redrow."

Cllr ones added: "This meeting was a good opportunity to discuss the concerns that residents have with the opening of Neale Drive to the A10.

"I am confident that a solution by opening both accesses would resolve this issue for all Buntingford residents.

"Further monitoring of the two accesses once all construction in the north of the town ceases would provide the information required to see if any further measures are required."

In response, Chris Gatland, head of planning at Redrow Eastern, said: "The closing of the A10 junction north of the site is subject to a Traffic Regulation Order which has not yet been obtained by the Highway Authority so Redrow are not progressing with this closure at present.

"In the meantime, work is continuing to deliver the remainder of the consented scheme and road layout, including the new A10 access link. We have not yet been contacted about a meeting between other local representatives and stakeholders."

A spokeswoman from East Herts District Council said: "We are aware of the petition and we are discussing a way forward with the highways authority."