

Speech re: Fir Tree School Building and Playing Field

My Lord Mayor, my name is Reverend ^{The Canon} Charles Dobbin and with me ^{Team Rector, Moor Allerton C/E Team Ministry; Chair, Moor Allerton Community Association} are Chris Feetenby ^{Chair Pastoral Parish Council St Paul's RC Church}, Sheila Collins, Dani Fox-Collins and Mr Ian Greenberg, Chairman of the Lingfields and Fir Tree Residents Group.

The Leeds 17 area is invariably regarded as one of the most affluent leafy suburbs in Leeds. However, the Moor Allerton Estate suffers badly from what we call "the curse of the LS17 postcode" as most people outside it have no clear perception of the real social and physical deprivation suffered by more than 5000 residents of Moor Allerton Estate with one of the highest percentages of elderly folk in Leeds.

^{all bashed up in the Profile of Moor Allerton}
Examples of the deprivation ^{are} are a lack of good houses and pleasant environment, minimal income, inadequate employment and poor health overall. There is an absence of a location where Council Officers would be near to their tenants to offer them support and advice. Moreover, we suffer too much crime and ~~not only are we~~ ^{are} in the bottom 10% of the Council's Deprivation Index, note, not in Leeds, not in Yorkshire, but also that of the whole country. We must bear in mind the long term needs of this deprived sector of our city.

Life would be much better if we had what other areas have. A Sure Start Centre – a Youth Centre with outdoor space for recreational activities – a One Stop Centre – and a Community Centre to serve all ages, and particularly elderly and disabled people. *We need more than* Not the limited one room *in the five* community centre we currently have. *~ have fought so hard to get* We desperately need these facilities for the benefit of the whole Estate. *It is not reasonable to expect social behaviour in an area and deprive it of the space for recreation and community facilities*

The sad closure of Fir Tree School, provided it is retained for the community and not sold for housing, is the answer to the prayers of all of us. This petition, which I have here, is signed by over 680 local residents and proves that in THIS locality we do not need even more housing – it is neither necessary nor desirable.

We cannot stress too strongly how vital it is for the whole Moor Allerton community that Fir Tree School building and its Playing Fields are retained for the community. This community has been deprived of resources for so many years. This is literally our "last chance saloon" because we have no other building or piece of land in the vicinity that can fulfil the urgent needs of our community. We hope our plea will not fall on deaf ears and that you will retain the site for the community of Moor Allerton.

Thank you Lord Mayor and Councillors.