

Email exchange between applicant and Paul Satoor CEO Wirral Council following the ‘complaint process’

The email exchange should be read from the bottom upwards.
It comprises only a small number of emails.

The applicant begins by stating that Mr Neal’s so-called investigation into the matter does not pass “the smell test”, and he sets out numerous reasons for this conclusion.

He provides an additional example of a resident who played an instrumental role in offering assistance to objectors via WhatsApp messages. This activity is documented in the detailed report previously submitted to the Planning Officer. The applicant also states that he is now in possession of Ring doorbell footage in which this same resident explains his personal relationship with Councillor Hodson.

The applicant further notes that this resident questioned another couple, who live just two doors away, asking why they “wanted so many bathrooms” and how many people would be living in the property. The wife in that household is of Asian descent. The applicant states that he sought advice from both lawyers and senior police officers, who confirmed his view that this comment was racist, and he records it as such.

Paul Satoor then attempted to distance himself from the matter. This is despite legal advice received by the applicant that Mr Satoor may have failed in his statutory obligations under the Equality Act and anti-corruption legislation. Mr Satoor informed the applicant that the matter, which the council had chosen to treat as a complaint, was now closed and referred him to the Ombudsman.

The applicant responded by pointing out that he had not submitted a formal complaint, and therefore the matter could not properly be closed on that basis. The fact that the council chose to treat the correspondence as a complaint was its own decision.

On 3 March 2025, Mr Satoor stated that he would appoint an appropriate officer to investigate the matter. However, at the time of publication in January 2026, **OVER TEN MONTHS LATER**, there has been no contact from anyone at the council. This absence of action further underlines Mr Satoor’s apparent attitude and prioritisation when dealing with substantiated allegations of racism supported by extensive evidence.

Subject: RE: U turn on planning - Phase 2
Date: Monday, 3 March 2025 at 14:40:57 Greenwich Mean Time
From: Satoor, Paul <paulsatoor@wirral.gov.uk>
To:
CC: Lewis, Mandy S. <mandylewis@wirral.gov.uk>, Stuart, Paul C. (Councillor) <paulstuart@wirral.gov.uk>, , Travers, Jill <jilltravers@wirral.gov.uk>, Neal, Matthew <matthewneal@wirral.gov.uk>, Corpserv-CustomerFeedback <customerfeedback@wirral.gov.uk>
Attachments: image001.jpg

Thank you for your further email. This has been passed to the Council's Customer Feedback Team who are responsible for logging all incoming enquiries (and complaints). Once logged your correspondence below will be assigned to an appropriate officer. This officer will respond directly to you as soon as ever possible.

Regards

Chief Executive's office
On behalf of Paul Satoor
Chief Executive, Wirral Council

paulsatoor@wirral.gov.uk



From:
Sent: 03 March 2025 14:29
To: Satoor, Paul <paulsatoor@wirral.gov.uk>
Cc: Lewis, Mandy S. <mandylewis@wirral.gov.uk>; Stuart, Paul C. (Councillor) <paulstuart@wirral.gov.uk>; ;
; Travers, Jill <jilltravers@wirral.gov.uk>; Neal, Matthew <matthewneal@wirral.gov.uk>; Corpserv-CustomerFeedback <customerfeedback@wirral.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: U turn on planning - Phase 2

Dear Mr Satoor,

I'm a little bit confused because I've never actually made a complaint. So I'm therefore not in a position to go to the Ombudsman as you suggest. Please note in many of my emails that I've deliberately put the word "complaint" in quotes. The Council may well be treating it as a complaint, but as I've not complained, I thought the quotes was the appropriate thing to do.

A few months ago, when the intended and documented planning officer's route for my planning application was "distorted" in the last hours before they should have made the planning committee, I emailed you to point this out. I assumed as the CEO that you would want to be

aware of such anomalies in your organisation. You have then triggered a series of activities within your organisation, one of the activities was a commitment to [REDACTED] to have your planning officer respond directly to [REDACTED], something that hasn't happened. If you don't want to respond to the points that I have raised below, then just please just say so and if you don't want to make good on a commitment to [REDACTED], then please just retract that commitment.

Please note that if I do wish to raise a complaint, then I will start it with "I wish to complain about".

We look forward to a response.

Sincerely

From: Satoor, Paul <paulsatoor@wirral.gov.uk>

Sent: 03 March 2025 13:23

To:

Cc: Lewis, Mandy S. <mandylewis@wirral.gov.uk>; Stuart, Paul C. (Councillor)

<paulstuart@wirral.gov.uk>;

; Travers, Jill <jilltravers@wirral.gov.uk>; Neal, Matthew

<matthewneal@wirral.gov.uk>; CorpServ-CustomerFeedback <customerfeedback@wirral.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: U turn on planning - Phase 2

Thank you for your email. The Chief Executive has no role in the Council's Complaints process. If you remain unhappy with the outcome of your stage 2 complaint, your next available recourse is to refer this to the Local Government Ombudsman as explained in the Stage 2 complaint response.

Kind regards

Paul Satoor

Chief Executive, Wirral Council

paulsatoor@wirral.gov.uk



From:

Sent: 03 March 2025 12:41

To: Satoor, Paul <paulsatoor@wirral.gov.uk>

Cc: Lewis, Mandy S. <mandylewis@wirral.gov.uk>; Stuart, Paul C. (Councillor)

<paulstuart@wirral.gov.uk>;

;

Subject: U turn on planning - Phase 2

Dear Mr Satoor,

I have received the attached email / letter written by Mr Mathew Neal as the reviewer of my "complaint".

Unfortunately, I am disappointed to say that Mr Neal's response simply does not pass "the smell test". I will respond directly and in full to Mr Neal but his most malodorous response appears straight away at Point 1 where he raises, a previously unstated point - that Councillor Hodson is not on the Wirral Planning Committee (I assume this relates to my referencing of a Wirral Globe newspaper article). Mr Neal, however, in a deliberate and calculated way, then fails to balance his point by not stating that Councillor Hodson's wife (also a councillor and also mentioned in the Wirral Globe article, commenting on hedges) , along with the obvious and clear conflict of interest, is herself on the planning committee. Mr Neal, in just a few words, and it has to be said, in just the first point he is making, exposes his bias, prejudice and agenda for all to see.

In the same point (1) he further comments '*You also state that Councillor Andrew Hodson has previously found ways to reject plans based on their personal opinions.*' – to be clear, I have never said this and I look forward to Mr Neal identifying where I have. For the purpose of clarity, what I have said is that it has been suggested to me that Mr Hodson has found a way to bypass the committee when planning applications do not meet with his personal criteria and agenda. Clearly what I have actually stated does not accord with Mr Neal's accusation.

Point 5 in Mr Neal's letter has a not dissimilar level of 'stench' where he comments "*You state that the plans ultimately submitted were Sarah's plans, not yours. I have nothing further to add to in relation to this point beyond what was stated in our stage 1*". It is more than fair to say that Stage 1 carried out by Miss McDougall was merely the summary of a chat between The Planning Officer, Sarah Lacey, based on her recollection, and Miss McDougall . There was no professional investigatory interview conducted, nor signed witness statements obtained and therefore no one can be held to account. Mr Neal has either not read, digested or understood the contents of the email exchange between Ms Lacey and me which was forwarded to Miss McDougall and yourselves, an extract of this is below:

I assume, from his title, that Mr Neal has had legal training and is likely a solicitor of sorts. If this is the case, then it defies belief that in these circumstances, when dealing with a formal complaint, that he has not applied sufficient attention to this and other details in my emails. When considered along the apparent bias in his report I question his suitability for conducting the review of my complaint.

Beginning of Extract

The gist of most of your response is that they are my plans/specification and that Sarah will support it. Yet the evidence in the email messages proves this is not the case and that it is Sarah's plan/ specification. Reason, logic and rationale also dictate that it is not possible for any Planning Officer, anywhere in the UK, to support plans that do not comply with the applicable rules and policy. It is common sense that any Planning Officer would know better than to support and approve plans that do not meet regulations and policy.

I draw your attention to an email from myself to Sarah on April 22, 2024 10:35 am, prior to the site visit, which states:-

I would be useful to have your thoughts on a compromise before our meeting so that we can think about these before we meet. Our main requirements for the extension are:

A first floor kitchen / dining / family room as the existing one is not large enough to support a property that has 6 bedrooms . First floor as it benefits from the views for a room where most of the time is spent. This isn't the only what I would call 'design flaw' in the existing property which I'm trying to address with the extension.

A 'balanced roof' as outlined in the proposal. The current roofline is positively 'ugly'

Sarah replies on April 22, 2024 11:28 AM

I am happy with the proposed pitched roof above the existing flat roof. I am also open to the potential of this roofspace incorporating front and rear dormer windows if the design is appropriate, but please be aware new additions to the proposal would require further neighbour notification.

If you wish to amend the plans we need to reduce the scale and proximity of the extension to the south boundary, to significantly lessen the impact on the rear garden and windows of [REDACTED] If the proposal was single-storey I think the proposal would likely be acceptable in close proximity, but I need to see amended plans before I can confirm this. This staggered appearance would also appear more acceptable when viewed from the streetscene, similar to the CGI image from [REDACTED] Architecture you included in your representation (pg. 26).

If you require additional first-floor space I would suggest exploring the potential for a 1.5 storey side extension which is set approximately 5m off the boundary to achieve the 14m separation distance, reducing to single-storey to the rear of the property. This would reduce the overbearing impact to the neighbouring garden, again I would need to see amended plans before I can confirm this is acceptable. Balconies are acceptable if you can demonstrate there is no additional overlooking to neighbours.

Alternatively a two-storey or three-storey extension to the rear of the existing property is another option you may wish to consider as there are good separation distances to the property to the rear.

Following the site visit, where Sarah marked out the areas where the extension could potentially be and explicitly told us, in exact details, the dimensions and specification that we could have (which is pretty much what she specifies in her email above). Sarah then emails me on June 3, 2024 2:27:03 PM

Hope you are both well. Following on from our site meeting, I'm just checking you want to proceed with the above planning application and wish to submit amended plans as discussed?

The previously agreed EOT is about to expire, please can we agree a further Extension of Time until 19 July 2024?

I then reply on 3 Jun 2024 at 14:46

Hi Sarah , yes very well thanks and trust all is good with you also.

Yes, please extend . We are looking to submit based on your recommendations.. work and travel has just delayed slightly.

Thanks for your patience and you should have a submission from [REDACTED] this week or early

next.

I think this puts to rest the question of whose plan / specification this is, and it has to be stated - We would never have come up with the 1.5 side storey extension on the right-side of the building, nor extending the property back into the rear garden which Sarah proposes in her first email. It is beyond doubt that this is Sarah's plan to her specification.

End of extract

It's fair to say, in just his Point 1 and Point 5, that Mr Neal has made a mockery of the Council's complaints process and stripped it of any remnants of integrity.

The expectation of [REDACTED] and myself was that the actual planning application itself would be reviewed, this would include examination of the drawings, the dimensions, the evidence provided in the above email exchange between myself and Sarah – specifically that it is Sarah's design and specification, and come out and carry out a site visit. I trust you agree that it defies belief that these obvious and basic steps, particularly under the circumstances of this planning application, have not happened.

Those circumstance being: -

1. These are the planning officers Sarah Lacey's plans and not mine. This is well documented and beyond dispute.
2. She has documented, not once, not twice, not even three times but ten times in her emails between on April 17, 2024 11:46:47 and 15 Oct 2024 at 12:02 that the plans *will* go to the Planning Committee. At no point does she deviate from this in any way, Sarah never states there is a route where it might not go to the Committee. The Planning Committee is the intended and documented route for the progression of this planning application. For reasons not known or made clear to me, this established process has been corrupted in the final hours of the application and the day before the committee meets. This is well documented and beyond dispute – what is not documented is how and why this happened. It is apparent to us is that some inappropriate intervention has taken place forming my suspicion of third-party involvement from some person preventing the application going through the proper, intended and documented channel.
3. That the objections are racially motivated, a factor which now appears to being perpetuated in some quarters of Wirral Council. This has previously been clearly and well documented; in addition to what I have previously stated, I was discussing with my next door but one neighbour Mr Mark Gidman, the owner of the property called Windrush. He lives there with his wife, a baby, a small child of 3 to 4 years old and 2 small dogs. He has also recently applied for planning permission. His neighbour - Mr David Gunter, whose property is named Primrose Hill asked him "*why do you need so many bathrooms, how many will be living here*". Mr Gidman's wife is of Asian origin. This is blatantly racist. It is of no coincidence that Mr Gunter and Cllr Hodson are personal friends and have been for quite some time. Mr Gunter is recorded with clear video and audio via Mr Gidman's "Ring" doorbell, explaining his personal relationship with Cllr Hodson to Mr Gidman. Mr Gunter and Cllr Hodson are also friends on Facebook. This is two properties in [REDACTED] less than fifty feet apart, owned by mixed race couples with mixed race children, both having planning rejected and both suffering racist abuse from other neighbours generally

and Mr Gunter specifically, a personal friend and a Facebook connection of Cllr Hodson; this is not a coincidence. My original response to Sarah Lacey included screenshots of Whatsapp messages in a "[REDACTED] Whatsapp Group" where Mr Gunter is inciting other residents of [REDACTED] to object to my planning application and offering assistance for them to do so. Mr Gunter can't even see my house from his property, and it doesn't affect him at all, but he takes it on himself to spearhead objections and rally support and he's "good mates" with Cllr Hodson. There are no coincidences here.

As you will have gathered by now, I'm not a person who makes allegations without supporting evidence. So before including these facts into this email, I have taken evidence from Facebook on Cllr Hodson and Mr Gunter's friend status and I have a copy of the Mr Gidman's Ring doorbell video. I have also have a statement from Mr Gidman re Mr Gunter's racist comment on email. Mr Gidman is prepared to expand on his opinions re racism expressed by Mr Gunter and his racist comments should the council wish to ask him, and he is also prepared to provide a signed statement.

Please do not forget that the backdrop to the above racism and connection to Cllr Hodson is that these are the planning officer's plans and her intended route for a decision was corrupted in unexplained circumstances in the hours before the application should have been placed in front of the planning committee.

I think it fair to say that in light of the above circumstances i.e. no actual review of the plans themselves, no site visit etc. during the so called investigation of my "complaint", the bias, prejudice and agenda stated in point 1 of Mr Neal's "review", the fact that he has either not read, ignored or not understood the email exchange between Sarah and myself over my requirements and her response.....and the fact that the easiest thing to do with this complaint was to put the plans to the Planning Committee and let the proper, documented and intended process for a decision to take its own course. The latter being the most simple and obvious thing to do, but this has been thwarted and blocked at every step by a few individuals in the Council.

The only logical conclusion that one arrives at is that those individuals in the Council, thus far involved in the "complaint process", have adopted a conspiratorial defensive position of 'cover-up' rather than properly examine the facts and carry out a fair-minded, independent, meaningful and thorough investigation and review. Whether this is cultural behaviour exhibited across Wirral Council or whether this is just the behaviour of a small cabal, I cannot say – only the next steps that you and The Council chooses to take will answer that question.

I'm not a believer in the use of legal means to resolve issues, however, It should be of no surprise to you and in fact I did state in one of my previous communications, that I have already taken legal advice. I instruct [REDACTED] for both company and personal legal issues.

It has been suggested to me that should Sarah's plans not receive approval, I would be able to recover all costs associated with my application and potentially liquidated damages. However, my objective is to get Mrs Lacey's proposed design and specified plans built, I am sure that the Council equally does not wish to go down the legal route with all the inherent costs this will involve, particularly in its current financial position.

I think it is fair to say that this planning application complaint has suffered from an abject lack of leadership and been pushed down to junior members of the Council staff. In your email of 7th October 2024, you stated ' [REDACTED] , I have asked Mandy Lewis, My Chief Planner to

ensure you are copied into all correspondence she sends to [REDACTED] Over three months later this has simply not happened, and we are still waiting for Ms Lewis's to respond.

You may recall that [REDACTED] replied that he was keen to see this as planning was currently under review by Parliament. I therefore trust that you can understand why this failure to fulfil a commitment to a Labour Member of the Lords only serves to heighten suspicions of a conspiratorial cover-up. I note also that neither yourself or the Council Leader have been copied into the stage 1 and stage 2 review letters sent by Council staff, as [REDACTED] has also not been.

We very much look forward to your response to the points I have raised and look forward to hearing from Ms Lewis and her response to the detailed points I have made and why no meaningful review has taken place or response given to my wife and I as regards racial discrimination and abuse.

Finally for the purposes of absolute clarity, [REDACTED] and myself specifically also want to know:-

1. Is the Planning Committee aware of the circumstances of this application, the fact that they were denied the opportunity to fulfil their function along with the conduct of the so-called review.
2. What is the name and title of the person who made the decision that the plans would not go to the Committee.
3. What was that person's legal authority to block the official process and what was their documented rationale.
4. What is the name and title of the person who made the decision to reject Sarah's plans.
5. Why were the actual plans not reviewed during the "complaint" process

Please rest assured that I will be relentless in my endeavour to get Ms Lacey's proposed extension built.

We very much appreciate the time you have taken to read and act on my emails and we look forward to your and Ms Lewis's response.

Sincerely,

Ps. You should also be aware that at no point during my engagement with the council have I ever been treated like, or felt like the tax paying customer that I am.

This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error please notify the system manager.