



Wigan[♥]
Council

Request

I would like to request copies of any correspondence, communications, or documents relating to the decision by Wigan Council to disable or turn off comments on the council's Instagram account on or around 12 March 2026.

This request includes any emails, messages, meeting minutes, briefing notes, reports, or other recorded communications discussing or referring to the decision, including the reasons for it.

Please include communications involving council officers and elected members that relate to the consideration, discussion, or decision to disable comments.

Response

Please see email attached which is the only correspondence regarding the decision to disable Instagram comments in line with our social media guidelines.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 12 March 2026 15:39
To: Winterbottom, James; Mckenzie-Folan, Alison
Cc: Downham, Lucy
Subject: Re: Insta statement

Thanks James.

I'll speak with the team and post at an appropriate time this afternoon / evening.

From: Winterbottom, James <J.Winterbottom@wigan.gov.uk>
Sent: Thursday, March 12, 2026 15:35
To: [REDACTED]@wigan.gov.uk>; Mckenzie-Folan, Alison <A.Mckenzie-Folan@wigan.gov.uk>
Cc: Downham, Lucy <L.Downham@wigan.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: Insta statement

Thanks .

I agree that it is better to explain why we have taken this action rather than be left open to continuous questions about.

I also think that the content you've suggested - whilst it will obviously generate some immediate reaction - is appropriate and as you said all information we have previously shared.

Thanks,
James.

James Winterbottom
Director of Strategy & Innovation

Wigan Council
Wigan Town Hall, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1YN

[REDACTED]

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@BewellW
@DigitalWigan

www.wigan.gov.uk
www.twitter.com/wigancouncil
www.facebook.com/WiganCouncilOnline



Wigan 
Council

From: [REDACTED]@wigan.gov.uk>
Sent: Thursday, March 12, 2026 14:57
To: Winterbottom, James <J.Winterbottom@wigan.gov.uk>; Mckenzie-Folan, Alison <A.Mckenzie-Folan@wigan.gov.uk>
Cc: Downham, Lucy <L.Downham@wigan.gov.uk>
Subject: Insta statement

We will be disabling comments on Instagram for now. This is because we feel it's unfair on those featured in our posts to receive negative and, in some cases, abusive comments on an issue that has nothing to do with them.

This is in line with our social media guidelines, which we have linked to in our bio.

For context, earlier this year Wigan Council's cabinet accepted the independent audit report of the planning process for the Astley Business Park development. Planning permission for the site, which has been earmarked for development since 2006 and is not green belt land, was approved in June 2024. The audit concluded planning permission was granted in line with national and local legislation and procedures.

The findings included:

- *Members of the planning committee were fully briefed and the training they received complies "with good practice standards".*
- *The committee report was "comprehensive and drew members' attention to the relevant planning considerations."*
- *The auditor was satisfied "that the decision makers at officer and member level took the decision in full knowledge of the relevant factors which were necessary to come to a reasonable and balanced view based on the planning merits."*
- *It is "unlikely any new and compelling matters would have been raised and that a different outcome would have resulted" if a wider consultation was conducted, with many objections being raised from residents not on the council's list of those notified.*
- *The council's consultation was undertaken in line with statutory requirements, with objections received from neighbouring residents covering a range of relevant subject topics.*

Nevertheless, the report also identified some areas for consideration to maximise transparency in the planning process, which we are happy to take on board. One example is to ensure site visits are organised for major applications.

Our response to the independent report was published on Facebook in January 2026 and uploaded onto our website. The council has also responded to media enquiries on this subject, and has been in correspondence with the Astley Warehouse Action Group.

The link to the full audit report, along with our response, is linked in our bio for those who would like to read more. We have also linked to Frequently Asked Questions about Astley Business Park, and our correspondence with the Astley Warehouse Action Group, which was published last year.

