

As a local resident's forum we have concerns regarding the Wigan Core Strategy proposed development of safeguarded land in our area. The sites in question for proposed development are land east of Stone Cross Lane, Lowton and land at Pocket Nook Lane, Lowton. There is also a further development that will impact on our area which is known as Rothwell Farm, Lowton Road, Golborne. These are all large sites and would represent a total of over 1,000 low-density houses if they all are used. There are currently 5,000 houses in Lowton East and the proposed developments could represent a 20 % increase. This would fundamentally and permanently alter the character of our village to the detriment of our community, and is viewed as thoroughly unacceptable to the residents of Lowton. We attach a tri-part letter sent on 11th March 2011 to the Environmental Services Department, from our MP Mr Andy Burnham, and Cllr J Grundy and Cllr J Cowley which expresses their concerns. (See Attachment 1)

Existing Build not in core strategy

You should be aware that on top of the Core Strategy proposed developments, there are already plans for 630 houses to be built on the old Bickershaw Colliery site. This will also impact on Lowton as residents from this development, who want access the A580 and the motorway, will need to drive through Lowton to do so.

Main employment areas

The main employment areas for people living in this area are Warrington, Manchester, Liverpool and St Helens. To access these towns people have to use the A580 or cross it to access the motorway network. There are five exits from the area onto the A580; these are Golborn Island, Stone Cross Lane, Church Lane, Newton Road/Lane Head and Atherleigh Way. Between the hours of 7am and 9am all these exit's have major congestion problems see attached map for Lowton (attachment 2.) This is reversed in the evening when people are returning from work between 4.30pm and 6pm. In the case of the Newton Road/Lane Head area this results in tailbacks in excess of 1.5 miles. We attach photographs of both Church Lane and Newton Road in the early morning rush hour, together with a letter from the school crossing control lady at Lowton St Lukes infant school. (Attachment - 2a and 2b).

There are four schools within 1.5 miles of the A 580 along Newton Rd (see Attachment 2) with over 1200 children accessing them daily. Also on Church Lane there are 2 Schools within a half mile of the A580 with around 400 Children attending. We consider that adding extra traffic to these roads would be detrimental to the children's health and safety.

Therefore we could not accept any further building in Lowton that would need to decant onto these already congested roads.

Infrastructure

On 3rd March 2011 we requested detailed information from the council on how they were going to improve the transport and sewerage infrastructure to accommodate the proposed new developments in the Core Strategy. Their reply stated that they could not provide this information at this stage as it is 'detailed planning' that will not be undertaken until the principle of further development in the corridor is established. However, they did say they are content at this stage that there are no transport or sewerage barriers to bringing forward any of the four potential sites however there will need to be investment in new infrastructure to serve the sites.

Public transport

In the Core Strategy document it is stated that the Lowton area is well served with public transport. This is misleading as the bulk of the services run between Wigan and Leigh and there are no direct services to the main employment areas of Warrington, Liverpool and Manchester. We are also lacking in rail services as there are no stations in the area.

Sewerage

We also find the council's comment incorrect on the sewerage issue. We have residents all across the ward, particularly in the Church Lane area, with sewerage problems following excessive rainfall. We are given to understand that the existing houses are served by a 9" sewer pipe which is inadequate. This will need further investigation. However in the council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan it states that United Utilities have identified that they have concerns with sewerage flooding, and that all pumping stations have performance problems we attach page 16 of this Plan. (Attachment 3).

Traffic

All traffic from existing housing estates, that are adjacent to the land east of Stone Cross Lane, decant onto Church Lane and Stone Cross Lane. Any new build will have to do the same as it is not allowed to decant onto the A580 directly. The same situation can be said for land at Pocket Nook Lane where traffic has to decant onto Newton Road. All three of these roads are already congested as are the exits from the existing housing estates at peak times. As said earlier we cannot accept any further traffic decanting onto Newton Rd or Church Lane.

Designation of land

We have issues as to when the change of designation took place from White Land to Safeguarded Land. The farmer's who owns the majority of land at Pocket Nook Lane have never been consulted about the change nor have local residents whose houses back onto the land. We attach letters from Mr JCS Leigh, Mr E Leigh, Mr F Walsh and Mr William Adamson of Carr Farm being the largest landowner expressing their concerns. (See Attachment 4 a b c d)

In the Core Strategy Mr Adamson's land is rated as Grade 3c for agricultural use. He would contest this and as stated in his letter the land was re-drained 3 years ago at considerable expense, and he now classes it as excellent growing land and he has no wish to dispose of it.

Also attached is a letter from ex Councillor Edward N Houlton voicing concerns over the change of land and any proposed development (4 e)

Affordable Housing

We attach page 14 from Wigan Development Framework Core Strategy Infrastructure Delivery Plan, sub heading 'Affordable Housing'. (Attachment 5) We have concerns that the areas identified as having the greatest requirement for affordable housing are Orrell, Billinge, Winstanley, Shevington, Standish and Aspull. None of these areas are within the Core Strategy document. Why are we seeing major house building in the Hindley, Leigh, Lowton areas and not areas indicated as being in greatest need?

Infrastructure development money

In the Core Strategy it is indicated that all infrastructure development monies accrued by developing aspirational houses in the Lowton would be used on infrastructure in Hindley and Leigh and not in Lowton. The new Localism Bill changes this thinking as it states that monies raised in an area where building takes place should be used in that area for the benefit of the community.

Land

From inspection of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (Figure 22) we note that part of the area of Pocket Nook is already owned by 2 development companies, therefore we would not want any of the existing farm land to be released for development. (See Attachment 6)

We could only accept building on the existing land that is owned by developers if the new sites decanted onto Atherleigh Way and that there was no access to or through the existing estates that back onto the land.

Safeguarded land

We find the definition of safeguarded land somewhat confusing as it can mean different things to different people. The following is a quote from *parliament home page*."

To the planning authority it becomes development land in waiting notwithstanding the expectation at the location for development when it is needed will be identified according to the circumstances at the time, because using safeguarded land will lead to less resistance than taking other land from the green belt. To developers it is invitation to submit an application because they will say the principle of development has been accepted. To opponents of development, safeguarded land is indistinguishable from allocated land.

Only something as irrational as green belt policy will spawn such confusion." (See Attachment 7)

We have no objections to small developments in Lowton that blend into the existing environment but consider the Core Strategy plans to be too intrusive.

It is also important that residents living adjacent to these four sites should have the threat of building removed and that if a site should be required it is identified now and the rest removed from the Core Strategy Statement.

However we will object to any of these sites being used because the only reason for the proposed development is money. We quote a comment printed in the Leigh Reporter 9Th December 2010 by Councillor Klieve Lowton West Ward – It's very clear the council needs money and this is one way of doing it I will be fighting to get affordable homes built in Golborne and Lowton.

At no time has anyone mentioned the quality of life for existing residents, it's all about getting money from the developers and the follow on council tax. We already have hundreds of houses on the market that are not selling, some for over three years. The infrastructure is creaking and the roads congested. We don't need any further development.

Edward Thwaite

Chairman