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2nd April, 2012

The LDF Programme Officer,
Town Hall, Library Street,
Wigan WN1 1YN

Dear Rachel,

Wigan LDF Core Strategy Examination: 28976

Further to our conversation on 20th March, I am writing to confirm my attendance on 18th April. If you need to speak to me during the intervening period and encounter any difficulty, please feel free to send me a text message.

Recapitulating, the identified problems with overall housing supply come on top of the Council's earlier failure to properly involve the public in the late revisions concerning both the Junction 25 commercial development and the four housing locations at Golborne-Lowton-Astley:

- The Key Sites and Broad Locations Evidence Paper misleadingly implies, in five separate entries (9.26, 10.19, 11.20, 12.20 and 13.20), that the broad location proposals launched in late 2010 were subject to a house-to-house leaflet drop throughout the borough in the middle of 2009. In each place (and context is important), the Evidence Paper says:

'We have consulted widely on the proposed key strategic site and the broad locations. To raise awareness of our proposals at the preferred options stage [June-August 2009] we produced an eight page leaflet [lately produced as BD4] detailing our proposals which we distributed to every household in the borough. We also carried out a series of public consultation events...'

- The Council are, in fact, referring to a supplement bound into the Summer 2009 edition of *Borough Life* magazine, and it would have been more straightforward to say so: for at least the delivery system is proven, even if the whole magazine is liable to be consigned to the bin, unread, by some. (The words 'We never read *Borough Life*' are ringing in my ears from a recent conversation with a neighbour.)

Arguably, the Summer 2009 *Borough Life* had a wider appeal than normal: the cover showed a 'PICTURE IN PINK' shot of the Queen on the occasion of her visit to Leigh Sports Village and, at the base, the strapline 'Have your say on Wigan's future > Eight page special inside.' Eight A4 pages is also more a brochure than a leaflet.

- However, there was no equivalent publicity in the *Borough Life* editions for Autumn 2010, Winter 2010 or Spring 2011, giving the same prominence to Junction 25 or the new residential proposals at

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Golborne, Lowton and Astley as The Bell achieved in 2009. There is nothing.

All of which means that households outside the immediately affected areas, as well as substantial numbers in them, will only have known about the 2010-2011 broad locations – if at all – through any general news coverage, the Council's reported ad hoc measures and any efforts mounted by residents themselves.

- There is increasing anecdotal evidence that people in the Lowton area were not, in fact, reached by the Council's drop-in sessions and remain in ignorance of what has been afoot.
- It follows that wider reliance, now, on locations at Golborne and Lowton would also be open to the charge of inadequate exposure to public comment. Going ahead on the basis of such reliance would simply compound the existing problem.
- The Council has already sought to introduce a further major strategic site identified as South of Atherton, wrongly described as previously-developed land, which gives rise to yet another issue of public involvement. Another looms on the horizon, should safeguarded land at Standish come into the equation.
- The only satisfactory way forward will be to formulate fresh proposals and ensure they are detailed in *Borough Life* in a manner similar to that used in 2009. Further, to ensure reluctant readers do not miss the significance of what they are consigning to their new blue bins, the Core Strategy should be the cover story.
- Alternatively, to overcome the unfortunate stigma attached to *Borough Life* – which may, in part, be attributable to a lack of seriousness, together with a suspicion that it is propaganda for the controlling Labour Group, issued at public expense – the Council should distribute a special Core Strategy brochure. Indeed, to contain costs, it could be substituted for a normal issue of *Borough Life*.
- Regarding the consequences of halting work, there is the danger of uncertainty in the medium term. Supply could dwindle or take off in the wrong places. There is also the risk that the Council might set itself unattainable timetables, once more. Consequently, there could be merit in keeping the Examination open, if that were felt practicable.

Naturally, I look forward to seeing any new submissions from other participants.

Yours sincerely,

