

26.03.15

Representation to the Inspector for Pendle Strategic Development Plan - Hearing

Session 3

Pendle Council has taken advice from land owners at Trough Laithe in terms of deliverability. In the case of the Strategic Housing Site, the developer has suggested a delivery rate of 50 houses per year from 2015 to an uplifted maximum from 481 to 500 houses based on 12.96ha of land.

Furthermore, in a meeting with Councillor Joseph Cooney 21.11.14, he suggested that Barratt Homes had been provisionally approached by the land owner at Trough Laithe and that executive houses were preferred by the developer.

This gives cause for concern, as surely it is Pendle Council who should be influencing the type of development? ie. Are we not in need of affordable and social housing?

This is a significant parcel of land which should be considered extremely carefully for inclusion within the plan.

During an exchange of communication with Andrew Stephenson MP via social media w/c 17 November 2014, Mr Stephenson said "...Sadly Peel who own the land want housing rather than employment, so the council have had to put this down as a possible strategic housing site."

Does the Council not have a choice of what to develop? By his very own admission Mr Stephenson MP admits the council have been led by the developer to allocate the land as a strategic housing site.

The decision to build 500 plus houses on a green field site should not be taken lightly and we should take as much time as is required to be completely satisfied that sufficient research has been undertaken. At this time, satisfactory detail has not been provided nor communicated.

Current house building rates for Pendle show that only 7 houses per annum are constructed, this suggests there is a distinct lack of demand for the type of houses on offer i.e. detached 'executive' properties.

Mix this assumption of detached executive houses with a large site of 12.96 ha and the council will have a failed development on their hands with little or no take up for the new homes as people in that type of market prefer smaller more exclusive developments.

First of all, we must understand the typology of housing unit? Is this number made up of; Affordable housing, social housing, retirement housing, assisted living, apartments, detached 'executive' houses, bungalows, semi-detached, terraced housing etc?

Section 3.34 to 3.49 in PBCs document 'Our Spatial Issues: Pendle Today', you major on the deprivation and overcrowded housing and the need for more affordable housing, yet you clearly contradict yourselves as Councillor Joseph Cooney admitted (meeting 21.11.14) that Peel have a preference for high yield Executive housing for Trough Laithe.

Most of all with house building on the perceived scale of Trough Laithe Farm there will be a need for significant investment in social infrastructure; where is the new £6m to £10m primary school, where is the nursery as promised by the business park development to the lower part of the site, where is the new doctors surgery, where is the new dentist. Is the developer willing to fund this type of social infrastructure through the CIL or Sc106?

The development of this site would significantly increase the current settlement boundary to Barrowford which resides at the edge of Wheatley Springs.

The amenity value offered by Trough Laithe is demonstrated by the impact of the site on surrounding areas.

Most notably, Trough Laithe provides vistas to keys areas within Pendle including Nelson and Colne.

This is something which should be taken seriously.

My representation 17 February 2014 was edited by Council representatives prior to publication, i.e. key evidential photographs and references were removed. I have reinstated the photographs to assist my representation. The mere fact that my representation was edited suggests that others could representations could equally have been edited?

When questioned, the response provided by John Halton via email (19.05.14) was that the Inspector would have access to full responses should they be requested? This is clearly not in the interests of the public and I would expect full unedited representations to be made public at all times.

The following 6 pictures are views from Barkerhouse Road in Nelson, Reedyford Road in Barrowford, The Shooters Arms and importantly, Albert Road in Colne...

Picture 1 - Barkerhouse Road, Nelson...



Picture 2 - Reedyford Road, Barrowford...



Picture 3 - The Shooters Arms, Nelson...



Picture 4 – The Shooters Arms, Nelson – Approximate Extents of Development...



Picture 5 - Cenotaph, Albert Road Colne...



Picture 6 - Colne Town Hall...



The Strategic Housing site at Trough Laithe plays a very important role in providing the primary vista which connects Colne with the country side beyond. This is very much evident when travelling between Colne Town hall and the Crown Hotel Public House. To develop this prime Green field site would in effect close the open feel and connection of a busy Town Centre main street to its surrounding green countryside.

The development of this site would be sacrilege and begin to destroy the open feel and reputation which Colne has as the 'Bonnie Town on the Hill'.

This view should become a Protected View for this aspect alone!

With over development and lack of understanding of the housing typology, Pendle Council is at risk of rushing a decision which would see key valuable sites being lost to profit hungry developers with the opportunity cost being the loss of benefits brought by the shear impact of such a site in terms of visual amenity to surrounding areas alone.

Should Pendle Council be forced into the retention of Trough Laithe Farm within their ultimate strategy then the suggestion is rather than considering the whole of the parcel of land in one single move; The land should be 'parcelled' and handed to developers in a phased manner i.e. split into thirds, fifths etc with a new planning application for each segment based on proof of demand, typologies, links with social infrastructure including schools and providing a full socioeconomic impact assessment, traffic impact assessments and preferably an Environment Impact Assessment at each phase.

Equally, design lead proposals should be considered seeking to build communities rather than turn their backs on well established residential areas by making 'islands' out of existing groups of houses. Sufficient green buffers should be designed into schemes between existing houses and new build development, eg village greens, woodland walks and trails rather than the usual 1800mm high fence with back to back gardens and the required 21m between living spaces – This does not present 'good design'.

Deer, an abundance of wild birds, rabbits, as well as farming stock are prevalent on Trough Laithe with hedge rows and tree cover used by all wild life. This provides a key element of wildlife to a rural area which would be destroyed and moved on for good should Trough Laithe be handed over to developers.

However, there is no strategy in the adoption of Trough Laithe as a strategic site, other than it provides a quick win and removes some of the pain from Councillors and Planners in achieving Central Government objectives. The Councils ability to judge objectively and with rationale has been clouded by developer involvement and influence.

Kind regards,

Paul Henderson