

# Lowton East Neighbourhood Development Forum (LENDF)

Contact Email Address: [lendf99@gmail.com](mailto:lendf99@gmail.com)

Minutes of meeting held on  
Monday 3 April 2023 at Lowton Social Club

Chair	(Currently vacant)
Secretary (Chaired the meeting)	Liz Brown (LB)
Treasurer	Irene Thomson (IT)
Minutes Secretary	Gill Turner (GT)
Councillors	Kath Houlton (KH) Edward Houlton (EH)
<u>Guest</u>	Alison Truman, Wigan Council
<u>Apologies</u>	
Deputy Secretary	Julie Shawcross (JS)
Councillor	Maire Cooper (MC) Kathleen Johnson (KJ) Gill Dickinson (GD)

**No. of attendees = 48**

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## 1. Welcome and previous minutes

Minutes not read out at meeting, but copies have been sent out by email and posted on the Facebook page and put on the LENDF website. New visitors and guests were welcomed to the meeting.

## 2. INFORMATION UPDATE ON 5G TELECOMMUNICATION MASTS

Presentation to give some background by LB (see presentation covering all item 2)

- ✓ There will be more mobile telecommunication masts in the future.
- ✓ The history of 2G to 5G was noted. 2G and 3G are being phased out.
- ✓ 5G antennae have to be located closer together than other masts so 5G antennae/cells may also appear on tops of lamp posts and buildings as well as on existing 3G/4G masts. All antennae need a power source.
- ✓ 5G data are transmitted via 3 different bands of radio waves, the shortest and most controversial wave length will not be used in the UK at present. (Thanks to Ian for this info)
- ✓ **Latency** measures the time required to request and receive data/command a device. It's measured in nanoseconds. 5G has lower latency which is better for real time applications like Alexa, and the internet of things.

- ✓ Some technical differences were discussed between types of Mast. Higher 5G bands have to have a direct line of sight to each mast (trees, buildings can affect this), and directs its beam. 4G sends out a 360 degree signal regardless of device location. Although 4G takes up more power per transmitter, 5G will require more transmitters so potentially may need more energy overall.
- ✓ Your mobile is always being sent a signal from a 3/4/5G phone mast so the system knows where your phone is at all times. This is so you get your messages as soon as they are sent. If you are concerned about radio signals or possible radiation then keep your phone switched off unless you need it. Also switch off your wi-fi at night when not in use or just used wired connections. Wired connections are faster than wireless ones.
- ✓ There are experts who check the safety of masts: OFCOM, UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), International Commission on Non-ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) The Council trust that these three organisations do their job and hence the Council don't consider the safety aspects of masts themselves.
- ✓ There are pros and cons for 5G and opinions are very divided. Some people think there are no benefits, only major health and security problems. Others are on the fence about it, others don't know the issues, others only see the perceived benefits. More of this later on in the minutes.

Alison Truman from Wigan Council presented the mast application process and used Braithwaite Road mast as an example

- ✓ Up to 30 metre poles need permission from the land owner but don't need to go through the full planning application procedure. Wigan Council Planning Department senior staff make the planning decision, **not** the normal planning committee made up of elected councillors.
- ✓ The 5G programme is Government led and they say it is essential for the economy. Masts can be shared by different providers.
- ✓ If the Council refuse Planning Approval then the mobile company can go to a Government Inspector who will apply Government procedures anyway.
- ✓ The council check installations are kept to a minimal and providers re-use old sites. The applicant has to justify the need for new sites and give other options.
- ✓ For Braithwaite Road there were no suitable existing buildings/masts to use although other sites were looked including the top of Lowton West Junior School! (*See planning submission document via link in presentation*)
- ✓ The Council issued a General Public Community Order and an erection site notice was put on a nearby lamp post. A photograph of this was shown in the meeting. The Council also wrote to 4 addresses: No 38, No 40 Braithwaite Road and the GP Surgery and Chemist. In theory the notice should be visible for 21 days to make residents aware and to object if needed. Minimum requirements dictated that either one sign was put up close to the mast location, or 4 letters sent, one to each of the nearest buildings.
- ✓ A certificate of compliance was provided by the mobile operator to verify the safety of the mast. The senior officer at the Council then assessed the visual impact of the 20m mast, thought it was OK, and signed it off.
- ✓ See presentation for links to the council planning submission for Braithwaite Rd.

### **Questions were asked by the group:**

- ✓ *Why didn't the Officer refuse the placement of the mast?* A Government Inspector would be brought in and there would be costs to the Council as the refusal would probably be overturned.
- ✓ Health concerns were raised by residents and guests: Especially as the mast is right next to a children's playground. As a certificate of compliance had been provided, the Officer could not object on safety grounds.
- ✓ Two residential houses (38 and 40 Braithwaite Road) were notified of the installation but none of them received the letter.
- ✓ Residents who walk the area did not see the notice on any lamppost. One resident walks past the said lamppost three times a day and did not see any sign. It is likely that it was torn down as there have been incidents of antisocial behaviour near the park at night.
- ✓ Visual impact of the mast was discussed and residents are not happy with it as it is very big and unsightly and can be seen from more than 4 residential houses.
- ✓ This mast will be turned on in May and another road closure will be requested by the provider to do this.
- ✓ Concerns were raised by angry residents about the notification process as residents were not aware of the mast until it was being erected. Discussions took place with ways the Council could improve this, notify local resident groups, post more than 4 residential letters, use the noticeboard right next to the park!! The notice could be on different coloured paper so it doesn't blend in with its environment. Saying just over the minimum requirements had been met isn't good enough, especially when there was no evidence that these documents had been seen by residents.
- ✓ The mast had been installed on land that did not belong to highways. One of the residents had pointed this out and the issue is currently with one of the senior lawyers in the council.
- ✓ *What money is received by the council for the mast?* None was the answer but as part of the process, a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) is required, and over £1000 is charged by Wigan Council for the highways inspector and will be charged again when the mast is turned on.
- ✓ Residents are concerned with the mast being near a local play area and impact of various concerns were discussed.
- ✓ Residents have a petition to get this mast taken down/re-located.
- ✓ Alison had to leave at 9pm.

### **A discussion followed about safety issues of 5G (see later slides from the presentation)**

- ✓ There was a recent judicial review instigated by the group ActionAgainst5G and Michael Mansfield KC (the barrister who represented Grenfell Towers victims) against the Government. Doctors, Scientists and Engineers provided evidence. The judge decided in the Government's favour. The court would only allow one small aspect of 5G to be examined so the wider safety concerns could not be explored.
- ✓ Guidelines and certifications provided by the Government are for safe distances to prevent heating to the human body (bees, insects, animals, that fly within 2metres will have a problem) There may be other adverse health risks to humans but this

isn't acknowledged. See ActionAgainst5G website for more details. See the OFCOM and UKHSA website links for counter arguments.

- ✓ It was reported that some councils have prevented masts being erected on all their land to stop the 5G rollout. It would take a full council decision to do this. However to add 5G antennae to existing masts doesn't now require permission so the 5G roll out will still happen. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-laws-to-end-mobile-coverage-no-bar-blues> The 5G mast on the A580 (East Lancs Road near Miller and Carter) – no objections as it was a change from 4G to 5G and residents didn't need to be notified of the change.
- ✓ Also masts can be placed on private land with the permission of the land owner.
- ✓ Looking at the 5G rollout, a lot of the country is already covered. <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/advice/ofcom-checker>

### What can be done?

- ✓ Study the links on the presentation in detail and look at the pros and cons. There are lots of different opinions, even among scientists. There is more on the internet!
- ✓ At present, individual new masts can be stopped by the council: on visual grounds but usually only if it is placed near a listed building or beauty spot; obscuring view from the road; a services issue (gas/electricity/water); a more suitable location eg other phone mast. It **can't** be stopped on radiation issues as the government (and the majority of world governments) say it's probably safe to go ahead.
- ✓ Petition Paul Prescott, member of the Wigan cabinet to change the notification procedures for new masts. <https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/Councillors-and-Committees/Cabinet/The-Cabinet.aspx>
- ✓ Sign up for weekly/monthly updates on new plans for Lowton East via <https://planning.wigan.gov.uk/online-applications/> and catch all plans as they arrive at the council. Note: Mobile phone masts don't go through the planning committee.
- ✓ Sign the petition created by Braithwaite Rd residents: <https://www.change.org/p/stop-5g-mast-at-braithwaite-road-lowton> and write your own letter to the planning department as often a petition only counts as one objection. Say the notification process is flawed and suggest reasonable improvements.
- ✓ If you are concerned about health issues then switch off your mobile phone and Wi-Fi when not in use.
- ✓ Write to your MP <https://www.jamesgrundy.org.uk/contact> about the government roll out. Note that all MPs ask you to submit your name and postal address to verify you are one of their constituents.

### **3. Updates**

- Litter pick near St Catherine's school last month – this went well with over 20 people attending. Many thanks to every one who came along. There is a picture on our facebook page. Thanks to Kathy Johnson for the snowdrops. A week later a couple of us planted a few English bluebells, lily of the valley, foxgloves, snowdrops and cowslips. We hope they will reproduce over time.
- If you are interested in future flower planting/maintenance or litter picking then please email LENDF. There is some balsam bashing afoot!

- Lane Head Traffic Update (S106 traffic monies) – The Council refuse to listen to practical reasons why their road alteration plans are dangerous or a waste of money. The 5 local groups have exhausted all avenues of council communication channels open to them. So it is with regret we are officially starting our complaints procedures and advising those seriously affected to do the same. In addition, the council are now struggling to do more detailed planning of the Lane Head alterations due to a very big gas main running under the service road, meaning it will be very costly to move it or very dangerous to let big 44 tonne lorries apply their breaks over it as they stop at the lights.
- Bypass: In June, there will be a meeting with Andy Burnham, Lane Head South Residents Group, LaGTAG, and Warrington, Wigan and Merseyside Councils to discuss the bypass!! Well done to everyone, especially Lane Head South Residents Group (LHSRG) and Graham Wardle of LaGTAG for getting this far. If this goes ahead it will make the Lane Head alterations redundant.  
**\*\*If you feel passionately about the bypass then LHSRG ask you to write to Richard Holden MP, Roads Minister, House of Commons, London S1A 0AA and tell him why it's a good idea\*\*** This will give the meeting in June a positive boost.
- Slag Lane road works (gas main replacement) This has been postponed until the summer holidays which should have less impact on traffic.

#### 4. **Upcoming Coronation events in May:**

- ✓ There is a free evening event at Lowton Social Club with comedy duo TIMELESS on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> May at 8pm. Free entry and buffet. Ticket entry ONLY, available 01942 510210.
- ✓ Lane Head South Residents Group – Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May, more details to follow.
- ✓ Lowton West Residents (LWR) are hosting a Coronation afternoon tea on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> from 2pm to 4pm at the Church Lane Community Centre. Some players from the ukekele band are coming along and there is a quiz. Tickets will be £5.

#### 5. **AOB**

- ✓ Do we know who has the key to the Braithwaite Road notice board? It's not been used in a long time and has very old information behind the glass.

### **Next meeting: Monday 12 June 2023 at Lowton Social Club**

Future meetings will be held every other month and in between Lane Head South Residents Group will hold their meetings.

#### **LENDF future meeting:**

- Monday 14 August 2023
- Monday 9 October 2023
- Monday 11 December 2023