

LENDF Supports Local Opposition to HS2 Rail Link Station at Lowton

Leigh Reporter dated 8th August contained an article regarding a summit attended by CBI North West, Manchester and Merseyside Chamber of Commerce, Campaign for North West Rail and St Helens, Salford and Wigan Councils, Andy Burnham MP and Transport for Leigh. This meeting was classed as a summit but no local councillors or members of the public were invited. Public money has now been committed by Lord Peter Smith, Leader of Wigan Council, in support of the rail link.

Support was given by these same people 2 years ago for a station at Pennington near the fire station, and public money was spent (tens of thousands) in creating a business plan which was rejected by Transport for Greater Manchester based on footfall.

For the latest attempt to succeed they would have to attract users from within a 25 mile radius of Lowton, therefore creating extra traffic on the roads that are already full. In the article of August 8th Mr Burnham states *"If we try to carry on as we are, our area will soon grind to a halt. The M6, M62 and East Lancs are full."*

Anyone can see that the proposed business plan would attract large amounts of traffic to the Lowton area therefore causing chaos into an already gridlocked area.

Let's look at the plan. The station would be on the south side of the A580 just before the old railway bridge, a quarter of a mile towards Manchester from Lane Head. This is Green Belt.

They want this station to interlink between the existing Liverpool to Manchester line and HS2. To achieve this they propose taking a loop line off the existing line near Winwick Lane, bringing it up to the East Lancs Road and linking back to the existing line on the Manchester side of the little chequered bridge on Wilton Lane, near Leigh Golf Club.

This act alone would destroy 4 farms making them unworkable. Once these have gone, the land would be easy picking for developers. In our view they would finish up having hotels, car parks and houses built on them.

We have just convinced the Government Inspector not to allow Wigan Council to build 2,500 houses in Lowton. The reason we were able to do that was because of the already existing traffic volume and poor infrastructure.

Ten years from now Wigan Council will have to produce a new Local Development Framework and all the land we have managed to save this time will be reconsidered for development. So if this station is also built we will lose green fields on both sides of East Lancs Road from Lane Head to Atherleigh Way, and possibly beyond.

Lord Smith states that Wigan has now put this station in its transport strategy and that Wigan Council and Transport for Greater Manchester has jointly agreed to commit funding to help make the business case. We feel that the residents of Lowton must be consulted.

At the LENDF meeting attended by Ged Tyrell and Neil Prescott from Transport for Leigh, it was agreed that a questionnaire would be produced and distributed to every household in Lowton to act as a referendum and would give a true picture of people's feelings.

Yes, the station they are proposing will be in Lowton not in Leigh - so how can they claim to be putting Leigh back onto the rail network?

LENDF's Chairman Mr Edward Thwaite, has visited all local residents groups and none are in support of this interlink station. The sooner we can produce this questionnaire asking for the resident's opinions the better.

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