

Lane Head South Residents' Group – Peter Sargeant, Chairman

37 Kenyon Lane, Kenyon, Lowton, Warrington, WA3 1LG

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14th November, 2012

Mr Stephen Robinson,
Managing Director, Wainhomes,
Cedarwood 2, Kelvin Close,
Birchwood, Warrington WA3 7PB

Dear Mr Robinson,

Lowton Marches development consultation

A good friend has supplied me with a copy of your leaflet. Indeed, they are coming from all directions, except apparently to residents in our area affected by your proposals, even though their houses and gardens can be seen on the southern edges of your two plans.

I hope to visit the exhibition on 20th November, although it may be that I shall not be the only person having to rearrange his or her life to do so: I was expecting to be around 500 miles away by late on Tuesday next. It is unfortunate, indeed, that you have not taken the trouble to give advance notice to, or otherwise communicate your intentions direct with, well-established community organisations like LENDF and ourselves.

As it happens, we have a meeting on Monday 19th and, like others in the wider area, we will be doing what we can to spread the message about your exercise. However, I must take issue with the parameters. You have apparently given limited notice to those around the margins of the area you are interested in; it is not evident that you have taken any steps to involve the communities at large. So far, you are just behaving like the Council.

You have also confused the issue by specifying the times in a mixture of 24-hour and traditional modes. (Does Wainhomes, perhaps, believe noon is 12 am and midnight 12 pm, as all too many now seem to believe?) More to the point, and it escaped my initial reading -- buried as the deadline is, in a corner -- you are asking for those who do get to know to make comments within three days of the event, even though 23rd November is a Friday. So people are not even going to be allowed to collect their thoughts over the weekend, if you have your way! Though my expectations may be low, I would not expect Steve Normington and Mike Worden to attempt such a Houdini trick. The risk is entirely yours.

Your leaflet contains suitably ambiguous sentiments about quality and who might get the houses, which one has to read closely to understand the true meaning of. One or two things appear vaguely positive, like retention of (somebody else's) woodland. Most of the detail is very difficult to make out and I doubt I am the only person who finds broken red lines difficult to see. It is not obvious that the public footpath nearest the A580 is unaffected. (The other one seems to have disappeared altogether, other than at the Church Lane end.) Quite what some of the other captions really mean may, perhaps, only become apparent next week. However, any contribution to 'aspirational housing' seems to be lacking.

I must also quarrel with the description Golborne/Lowton. Golborne and Lowton, despite the best efforts of the present LPA and its predecessors to blur the edges, are different places;

indeed, Lowton itself is several places rolled into one. So much so that, in times gone by, it was apparently possible for people to be happy with Golborne UDC having Lime House at Lane Head, in Lowton, as its HQ. Whatever the Council may be saying to you, its own formal structure is presently built on a Lowton East Ward, whose boundaries place all your ownership/option land (whichever it may currently be) in Lowton. Golborne is with Lowton West. Furthermore, as developers in the area, you should already be aware of the distinctions. Please therefore, at your leisure, consult www.lendf.co.uk to see the Lowton East boundary on their Home Page. If then you need to understand where the historic demarcations are, I shall do my best to help you on the ground.

Meantime, your proposal is premature, pending consideration of whether or not delivery of so much additional mass market housing in Lowton, in your chosen location, can be judged consistent with the original LDF Core Strategy.

At a practical level, it is difficult to see how it is intended to work. The access point chosen onto Church Lane debouches where traffic queues are already a problem. There is no overt reference to controlling through traffic and the scheme makes no attempt to spread the load on Church Lane by incorporating limited use of existing stub roads further back from the A580. If the new 'boulevard' would be gated (something of a contradiction), you do not say so or explain how it would work. It seems we are either faced with the Church Lane end being closed, other than to buses and people with passes, or glorified rat-running along the 'boulevard' and/or around loops within the estate, to avoid the gates located towards the Stone Cross Lane end.

Without some measures, the 'boulevard' has the potential to act as a bypass to Church Lane, between Golborne and the Lane Head junctions, and to absorb A580 traffic that is not presently attracted onto the B5207 route because of the congestion at St Luke's and the more direct alignment of the A580. In addition, some users of the Stone Cross Lane junction could suddenly find the 'cross-country' route from Church Lane more attractive, making the loading on Church Lane even more problematical. Whilst settlement would occur, at times of severe congestion in the A580 corridor and when accidents clog the network, the estate would suffer. However, a profound issue arises in relation to deliveries and tradesmen. Deliveries of groceries and other items are now more than ever a fact of modern living, driven by so-called internet shopping. Gating the boulevard in any way would compound the potential rat-running problems within the development and/or limit times of availability of goods and services, creating a nightmarish situation for all concerned.

Meantime, existing residents would be inhibited from going about their ordinary business, because the most direct routes towards Wigan and local destinations would be more difficult than they already are. Guessing, you might consider a directional arrangement, whereby AM traffic could only get in at one end and PM traffic could only get in at the other. However, this would clearly be arbitrary in its effects and force people to make extended journeys to get back to their own houses or to effect deliveries, so adding an extra level of congestion to that already directly attributable to the new estate. Frustration also causes accidents.

Yours sincerely,