

Minutes to the Meeting with Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP
 Lowton East Neighbourhood Development Forum (LENDF)
 Held on Thursday 3rd January 2013, at Lowton Social Club.
<http://www.lendf.co.uk>

- Chairman – Ed Thwaite (ET), Secretary – Irene Thomson (IT)
- Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP (AB)
- Cllr James Grundy (JG)
- Peter Sargeant (PS), Chairman of Lane Head South Residents Group
- Representatives from Oaklands and Meadows Residents Association (OMRA) and Braithwaite Residents Association (BRA)
- Welcome to members, visitors and guests

No. of Attendees = 53

Andy Burnham had been invited to attend this special meeting with LENDF in order to discuss the impact on Lowton residents in view of Wigan's Core Strategy proposals which contains over 2,000 houses to be built in the area over the next 15 years, and the fact that Wainhomes have now submitted a planning application for residential development on land between Stone Cross Lane and Church Lane.

1. Ed Thwaite (Chairman) welcomed Andy Burnham to LENDF's meeting and for the benefit of new attendees proceeded to summarise the current position of the Core Strategy and Wigan's policies:
 - The original Local Development Framework Plan is to be replaced by the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy is currently being examined by a Government Planning Inspector.
 - Wigan Council has set its own target of 1,000 dwellings to be built per year.
 - The Inspector noted that during the last 3 years there has been a shortfall of house builds.
 - The Inspector requested that Wigan Council bring forward land for development to meet this shortfall and to look at the Borough as a whole.
 - Before consultations with the public took place Council Officers reported to Wigan Cabinet that they wanted Lowton/Golborne sites to be used.
 - The public consultations were organised poorly but Lowton managed to put 1,300 objections forward.
 - Wainhomes have put forward a planning application for housing on land between Stone Cross Lane and Church Lane.

2. ET then asked those present to approach AB with questions bearing in mind that LENDF is non-political and only a healthy debate would be permitted. Also there was a time factor for questions to AB as he needed to leave after 1 hour's attendance.

Question	Has all Brownfield land been identified?
	A resident stated he had asked this question to the Officers present at the Public Consultation at Compassion in Action. The reply had been that none of the Brownfield sites had the necessary capacity.
Question	Highway infrastructure is poor in this area. What will be done to help?
	There is a need for an additional road i.e. extension to Atherleigh way and opening up of Crankwood Rd to Dover Lock.

	<p>ET noted that car ownership in this area is one of the highest in the Borough and that there is less useage of public transport. These points have already been noted by Wigan Council in their own documentation.</p> <p>AB agreed that the Core Strategy is not being fair to this area. There is already congestion on the East Lancs Corridor. However it doesn't help when the Government are pushing Councils to build.</p> <p>AB was very pleased to see a good turnout for the meeting as it shows the strength of feeling of the residents.</p> <p>In March the Gov't Inspector will be returning to Wigan Council to review the Core Strategy and the changes the Council have made. AB has asked to speak at the Examination meetings; also Cllr Pam Gilligan and Cllr James Grundy have asked to speak with the Inspector.</p> <p>AB has already written to the Chief Executive of Wigan Council.</p> <p>Adding more junctions to the East Lancs Road is not the answer and in AB's view there is a lack of balance in the Core Strategy, especially to an area with public transport issues.</p>
Question	Will the Wainhomes application be permitted before March?
	JG voiced his opinion that the Planning Committee should defer a decision. JG asked AB to make this request and AB agreed.
Question	St Catherine's church is now closed but what is going to happen to the land. Could it be sold to developers for housing?
	The future of this land is still unknown.
Question	During the last 4 years there seems to have been a lot of house building – do we have the figures?
	AB regarded this as an important point and the problem has been a 'filling in of spaces'. One argument which could be used against the Core Strategy is that the site in Standish was dropped even though it is actually better located due to its road infrastructure.
Question	More people objected in Standish – is that why?
	JG noted this was true and it was due to the councillors and community of that area had got more pro forma's signed up. Lowton East has learned from this. ET repeated that Wigan Cabinet had been told that the Council Officers stated they could only put Lowton into the Core Strategy as the Inspector would reject any other additions.
Question	BICC, Leigh – Has permission for 1,500 houses. Bickershaw – Has permission for 560 houses. Why have these sites not yet been developed ?
	<p>AB stated that developers are land banking.</p> <p>Bickershaw North could be 10 years away from development.</p> <p>Bickershaw South though is coming forward at the moment and AB stated that the Housing Communities Agency had 6 developers interested in the Bickershaw South site and that one would be chosen probably by next month.</p> <p>AB also confirmed that the Kamikaze Island is to be redesigned and work is due to start soon.</p> <p>A resident noted that he had asked Wainhomes about Bickershaw only to be told they were not interested in that site. Slag Lane will suffer traffic from Bickershaw which will then feed into the existing traffic nightmare on Stone Cross Lane.</p> <p>A Traffic Assessment had been done for Bickershaw South – obtaining a copy-</p>

	of this document would be very useful. JG noted that builders only want to build prestigious houses (at the moment).
Question	Could Crankwood Road be opened through to Dover Lock ?
	This idea has already been rejected by the Council
Question	A Traffic Assessment had been done on Church Lane during the 'summer holidays' and yet Wainhomes have stated that each junction has capacity!
	AB agreed that traffic was the main issue for Lowton and we need to prepare evidence to present to the Inspector in March. A Freedom Of Information request will be sent to Wigan Council. Also Air Quality is an issue and an Air Quality Assessment needs to be seen. The Traffic Assessment submitted by Wainhomes contains factual errors e.g. regular buses on Nook Lane when in fact there are 3 a day! AB suggested LENDF commission a third party to review the documents submitted by Wainhomes. Peter Sargeant asked for everyone to take the time to read the TA and find these errors and comment on them to the Council. In fact Appendix A of the TA contains emails where comment has been made that it is not acceptable to create additional traffic in the peak hours.
Question	Surely there are professional people amongst Lowton's residents who can help us!
	LENDF will set up a sub-committee i.e. 6 or 7 people plus all 3 councillors and AB. Those who wish to be on the sub-committee, please volunteer. LENDF needs to mobilise public feeling, pull together evidence and then put forward our campaign to the Inspector.
Question	The local schools are at capacity and there are no places even now. Can this be included please?
	The lack of places is already noted as an issue though it was brought to the meeting's attention that Lowton J & I will soon begin work on an extension which will increase their capacity.
Other Comments	Coal fault runs through the Stone Cross Lane site – Impact on NHS – Flooding – Empty properties exist in the Borough.
	Land Ownership has been questioned previously too. Mr Adamson has been approached by developers but has categorically stated his land is not for sale. Mr Adamson has already written to the Council asking that his land be taken out of the Core Strategy as it is not for sale. There are concerns though that the Council may use its power of Compulsory Purchase but JG had recently found out that this could only occur if no other land was available.

3. At this point in the meeting Andy Burnham needed to leave but thanked LENDF for the invite to talk to residents and will return and take part in as many sub-committee meetings as possible. Also he will ask his secretary to liaise with Irene with regard to using online media to mobilise support for the cause e.g. online petition, etc. Everyone then showed their appreciation by way of applause. The meeting then went into a 10 mins recess.
4. When the meeting restarted volunteers for the Sub-Committee had been noted and a total of 11 residents have agreed to meet weekly. All 3 local councillors will be invited and ET will arrange dates with Lowton Social Club. First meeting is confirmed as Monday 7th January at 7.30pm.

5. ET again reiterated the importance of gaining as many objections as possible. Please use the proforma letters by speaking to your neighbours and it is known that asking them to sign there and then, will get more done rather than just leaving them with the letter. One letter per individual. A resident volunteered to stand outside the Co-op on Church Lane this Saturday with proformas and invite people to sign them. He would welcome some help if anyone can spare some time to assist. Irene to email this request to all on the LENDF circulation list.

Next LENDF Monthly Meeting

Monday 14th January 2013 @ 7.30pm (Lowton Social Club)

Should you find any omissions or discrepancies in these minutes please contact me on lendf99@gmail.com and let me know as soon as possible and the errors will be rectified.

Irene Thomson,
Secretary – LENDF