

Lowton East Neighbourhood Development Forum (LENDF)
Minutes to the Meeting held on Monday 11th February 2013, at Lowton Social Club.
<http://www.lendf.co.uk>

- Chairman – Ed Thwaite (Ed T), Secretary – Irene Thomson (IT)
- Peter Sargeant (PS), Chairman of Lane Head South Residents Group
- Welcome to members, visitors and guests

Apologies – Graham Maskery, Timothy DeMore, Bev & Simon Ellison, Ed Houlton and Cllr Grundy

No. of Attendees = 47

1. **Minutes from last meeting** – not read at meeting but copies had been sent out by email and paper copies were available.

2. **Accounts**

LENDF bank balance details on view for those present at the meeting.

£250 currently been donated for the 'Say No' signs – many thanks to all. The signs cost £7.50 each and if you are willing to have one placed in your garden (especially on the main routes in and out of Lowton) then please send us your details. You can also buy one and we will find a 'location' for it.

3. **Correspondence received since last meeting**

Malcolm Jones from Oaklands and Meadow Residents Association has begun the task of researching the Crime Statistics for Lowton East. These will be reported to the meeting each month.

Ed Houlton had sent a Freedom of Information Request to Wigan Council asking if they have had any communication with the freight industry. The response from Council was unclear and Ed H is pursuing the matter and will report back at the next meeting.

LENDF have sent a Freedom of Information Request to Greater Manchester Transport regarding the junction of Church Lane with the East Lancs Road. Information had come to LENDF that this junction was the second busiest in Greater Manchester and we asked for validation or information regarding this.

It had been reported to Ed T that Cllr O'Brien, a Leigh councillor, had stated at a council meeting that LENDF were 'misleading people'. Ed T emailed Cllr O'Brien and asked why he thought this so we could stop or explain our position. To date we have had no reply.

Ed T has also sent an email to Cllr Cowley asking for his latest position on the housing situation. Again no reply received.

Cllr Gilligan was invited to attend this meeting to explain her reason for requesting a change to our sub-committee minutes. She failed to attend or send apologies.

With regard to emails sent to local councillors, the question was asked about their duty to respond as many of those present had written with comments on various issues but had not received replies. It was suggested that the 'Code of Conduct' for councillors be checked in relation to responding to constituents' questions.

The local police have been informed of motorists speeding on Laburnum Road, mainly during the 'school run' as this road leads to a school at the back of the estate. PSCO Jane Tymon had responded *"I will forward your concerns onto our traffic unit, due to other similar complaints OP CAMENCA (traffic unit) will be in the area and will take a look at this."*

The Council are due to begin the roll-out of the 20mph zones throughout the Borough.

LENDF had been contacted by Age UK to allow a representative come to one of our meetings to discuss various issues. Ed T asked those present if they agreed and it was proposed to organise this for a future date.

The LENDF Constitution has been amended and updated and the Chairman read this out to those present and asked if all agreed with its content. The consensus was yes.

LENDF also now have a 'Safeguarding Policy' and this too was read out to those present and asked if all agreed with its suitability and content. The consensus was yes.

4. Wainhomes Application

Ed T has been in regular communication with Mr David Rawsthorne who is the delegated officer for the application. Mr Rawsthorne stated that it will be a few months before the application is put before the Planning Committee and that he will continue to receive objections/comments. So far they have recorded 1,350 objections.

The door-knocking events are working well and many residents on the Scott Road estate have thanked us for taking the time to pass information to them and helping them to make their comments. Many thanks all those volunteers who helped us.

We shall be doing another session of door-knocking to complete the full length of Slag Lane. Anyone who can help please meet on the Rams Head car park at 1pm on Saturday 16th February. It will be important to encourage these residents to participate in the 'Say No' sign boards as Slag Lane is a notorious road for congestion at peak hours.

An idea was suggested regarding car stickers! There could be a possible cost involved but LENDF will investigate this.

A question was raised about further surveys which had been recommended by consultants, and also that Judith Smith (Manchester Raptor Group) was planning to return to the site in March to review the Barn Owl occupancy of the site to confirm if it was nesting. [Post Meeting Note: Irene had emailed the same question to Mr Rawsthorne and his response was *"depends on whether Officers and Members feel they have enough information to make a decision on the application both as a minimum statutory requirement, and also based on the views made by Consultants."*]

The consultants who produced the Coal Mining Assessment have indicated in their report for Wainhomes that they believe activity has ceased and settlement has finished. Residents living close to the site said they doubt this.

Over previous years a number of small house builds and of course the Stone Cross Park, pub/restaurant and McDonalds have gone through planning successfully. Have we got a chance of stopping Wainhomes? Ed T responded that now that LENDF exists and is involved we are making more residents aware of what is happening in the area and hopefully this will have an influence on the Planning Committee.

We have been receiving photographs from residents who have either been stuck in the traffic queues, or nearly stuck in the middle of A580 due to the lights sequencing being out of kilt especially at Lane Head, and also from pedestrians who whilst walking their children to school, see the same cars when they walking back home ! We would like more of these please as we can use them as evidence of the congestion. Let us know the time of day when the photo was taken. A number of these photos have already been uploaded to our Face book page. Kath Houlton has arranged with a pilot to video the congestion from the air and is waiting for the mornings to be a little lighter in order to create a good quality recording.

5. Core Strategy

The Government Inspector's Examination of the Core Strategy will begin in March and the Lowton/Golborne sites will be discussed on **Wednesday 6th March at 1pm. The venue is Leigh Sports Village in the Banqueting Suite.** [Irene has since found out that this suite can hold up to 200 people]. The 'fighting' team will consist of Andy Burnham MP, Cllr James Grundy, Cllr Pam Gilligan (tbc), Ed Thwaite of LENDF and Peter Sargeant of LHSRG.

Members of the public can attend and will be seated around the outside of the main discussion table. You can not speak to those at the table but you can pass written notes to Irene of any issues you wish to be raised. The larger the 'audience' the better effect it will have on the Inspector when he sees the amount of concern you have for your area. **Please attend if you possibly can.**

LENDF's letter to the Inspector, and some additional evidence documents, has now been sent. (This will be uploaded to website).

A question was raised if we needed an independent body to help us prove there are traffic problems in the area?

We do already have evidence stated by Rob Owen, Traffic Engineer, Wigan Council, in 2011 primarily in respect of the Wainhomes site, that... *"Increased peak hour demands on the Strategic Route Network will throttle development and economic aspirations elsewhere in the Borough. This is not acceptable."*

A resident from Golborne pointed out that even the traffic trying to reach Golborne island had experienced major congestion as it can sometimes take an hour just to reach the island! All agreed that issues of congestion can be increased if accidents or incidents occur on the motorway network or A580 itself. Warrington Road coming into Lowton from the M62 will regularly have queues as far back as the strawberry farm!

Ed T pointed out that, unlike Wigan, Salford had reduced its build programme to a lower level to take account of economic climate. This is what should have happened in Wigan and a realistic target set.

Discussions then revolved around that fact that the current economy is struggling and that houses are not selling – therefore why build more! If a housing developer gained permission to build it's doubtful they would even start until the economy recovers which according to Government could be as far off as 2018.

The Government has relaxed the planning laws as a way of generating a recovery – even 'Change of Use' is easier to obtain as the Government want to encourage properties such as offices, shops, etc, to change to residential use.

6. HS2

The 'preferred' route for the HS2 was then discussed especially as it will have an impact on the Pocket Nook site which will hopefully mean it will no longer be an option for housing!

The HS2 plans had been viewed by an engineer who informed Ed T that at the points where it goes under the East Lancs Road and under Newton Road it will actually be 8 metres down in its own 'cutting' and therefore will not be visible. Those residents whose homes are affected have received details of the compensation process.

A question was raised about stopping the HS2. Ed T responded that a number of high profile organisations including the National Trust had tried and had not been successful.

Comment was made about a station for Lowton – this does seem unlikely at the moment but it may be worthwhile to try and fight for one at Kenyon.

The route has a huge impact on Slag Lane as this will be closed at the junction of Byrom Lane and a new road will link across to Sandy Lane on the St Luke's side of Grundy's Farm. It looks like there will be no access to Leigh.

7. Any Other Business

Last year LENDF organised two 'free' events (Fun Day and Last Night of the Proms) for the community which both occurred on the same day to maximise the usage and lower the cost of hiring the Civic Hall. Ed T asked those present if they thought it should be done again.

It was agreed the better of the two events was the Last Night of the Proms evening which had the collaboration between Golborne Brass Band and Lowton Newton Community Choir. We have been asked many times 'Are you doing it again?'

For such a production we would have to use the Civic Hall as the large stage would be needed to accommodate the band and the choir.

For the Fun Day it was decided to consider using the Lowton Social Club and possibly the outside areas. The Social Club is an underused venue but has a fabulous event room and stage, and can seat 300 people. The Club is always looking for new members and LENDF asked that people join and support it.

In due course we will be asking for volunteers to create a sub-committee to help organise these events and to also be available on the day to help with the running of them.

8. Next LENDF Monthly Meeting

Monday 11th March 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