

Site H74 – Grane Village, Helmshore

Statement in response to MIQs - pages 23 and 24

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On Thursday 6 June 2019 members of Grane Residents' Association attended Taylor Wimpey's public exhibition. The consultation had been arranged to seek the views of local residents, following the distribution of 680 leaflets covering properties in a radius of the proposed development which had been agreed as appropriate by Rossendale Borough Council. However local residents in the Heap Clough area of Grane were not included in the mail shot, despite the fact that development at H74 Grane Village, Helmshore will result in a significant increase in traffic passing their properties. The plan, although attractive provided very little detail as to the size or height of the properties proposed.

In Taylor Wimpey's previous suggested plan the access/exit route to the site was situated on Grane Road but following representations by GRAss on behalf of residents in this vicinity, and consultation with Lancashire County Council, the site entrance was re-located to Holcombe Road. Although this resolved the problem for residents at risk of losing their parking facilities, having nowhere else to park, the majority of vehicles will still be accessing the busy Grane Road to join the M65 and A56. This will put pressure on properties in the region of the Holden Arms should traffic lights be proposed, as this would cause a detrimental effect from idling vehicles. In a survey undertaken by GRAss in 2003 it was revealed that **37%** of local residents answered yes to the question, "Do you or a member of your household suffer from Bronchitis, Asthma or any other respiratory complaint?" In a further survey which asked the same question in October 2018, the number had risen to **66%** of those surveyed.

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Properties directly adjoining the site are in the minority and face a dramatic impact on their health and wellbeing should H74 be allocated for housing, allowing 150-174 houses. At the time of writing the current proposal by Taylor Wimpey is to build up to the adjoining boundary of existing properties, thereby destroying the open aspect, peace and tranquillity enjoyed by residents who have lived in their properties for many decades.

Taylor Wimpey's literature dated 9 October 2017 states:

Landscape Assessment

"The Council's Landscape Assessment recommended that planned gaps in the layout of the site should be used to retain views to Tor Hill. It is not considered that the existing view to Tor Hill from the identified viewpoint on Grane Road is of exceptional quality due to the visual influence of the large scale industrial buildings which dominate the foreground to the left of the view. As such, it is not considered that the quality of this existing view is high enough to require the entire view line to be kept free from development."

“Appropriately designed development can be delivered on the Grane Village site without resulting in significantly adverse effects upon landscape character, landscape features, or visual receptors.”

We disagree with this statement in its entirety. Grane Residents’ Association opposed the development of this site for employment purposes in 1991, along with the major landowner, when it was stated that the land and gardens would be compulsory purchased with factories built, “right up to your back doors” in the words of a former Rossendale Planner. We strongly objected to the construction of the Court Yard but as this land was already designated for employment purposes, our views were over ruled. At the time we sought for the development to be sympathetic to the area but our views were ignored and a large number of residents lost their open view of Tor Hill. Does this mean that the rest of the residents along Grane Road, who currently enjoy this view, should do likewise? It is clear that the developer knows little about the area and its residents. Tor Hill is not only a “view” it is a landmark in the locality with the Tor Mile Fell Race being keenly fought on an annual basis.

It should be noted that in its marketing material Taylor Wimpey highlights Tor Hill in promoting the development to prospective buyers.

Ecological value

“The site is scored as red in this category, with the commentary explaining how a small strip of land in the site is located within woodland and grassland Stepping Stone. The Development Statement for this site considered all ecological matters, and concluded that there are no ecological or arboricultural constraints preventing the development of this site and appropriate mitigation will be provided where necessary. Additionally, the area of high ecological value to the south-east of the site has been excluded from development and will therefore be protected by proposals. This is not considered to be an issue on site, therefore the site performs better than a red scoring in this category when taking into consideration the masterplan.”

In the Planning Inspectorate’s report dated 21 July 1993 following the appeal by William Hargreaves Ltd for development on the site of the former Bleachworks, which now contains residential properties and offices, the Inspector stated:

“It is the Council’s contention that any loss of the proposed Greenlands allocation on the appeal site would adversely affect its integrity by providing the opportunity for development to be introduced to a topographically prominent part of the Ogden Brook Valley. The area to the south is considered to be part of a larger tract of land along the course of the Ogden Brook and the linear footpath route. Whilst the Council had agreed that the area that the appellant now wishes to see excluded from condition 12, could be used for informal parking it considered it should be kept free from buildings. Mr Gaffney, on behalf of ‘Save Grane’ expressed concern that development beyond the existing derelict site, currently defined as Special Landscape, would effectively cut off the present area of Greenlands adjoining the urban boundary from the open countryside. The Council had

acknowledged the Group's objection to further development in the area in its recent proposed Modifications to the Draft Edition, by omitting the area to the north of the site from the industrial allocation." ***This is the area currently under review to be designated for housing following a change to the urban boundary.***

The Inspector further stated, "It is stated that the Council will seek to locate all new development within the defined urban boundary and that all areas outside this boundary are of Special Landscape Value where, as a rule, development will not be permitted. It will also seek to reclaim derelict land for an appropriate use. It is provided, however, that the Council will, wherever possible, aim to prevent development adversely affecting significant wildlife habitats and will expect a clearly apparent woodland zone to be provided between new development on the periphery of the urban area and the open countryside beyond."

In Grane Residents' Association's response to the Regulation 19 Consultation it is stated that there is currently an abundance of flora and fauna inhabiting the H74 site, which we believe should be protected. At the very least a buffer zone to the northern edge of the site bordering Grane Road should be retained as a wildlife corridor and to discourage creeping development, as recommended by the Inspector at the Public Enquiry in 1993.

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It is an accepted fact that there are uncertain times ahead in relation to climate change. We have previously highlighted our concerns regarding the possibility of increased rainfall which could result in water run-off and flood risk, should a housing development be permitted. Are we to ignore these predictions and build regardless of the consequences?

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The following quote from CPRE's Summer 2019 edition of Field Work states:

"CPRE's recommended that the Commission highlights the continued relevance of, and need for, Green Belt policy as part of a suite of measures to help address regional inequalities. In our view, if Green Belts did not exist then imbalances would be worse still, as developers would gravitate to sites with higher land values nearer major cities, especially London. There would be less incentive to regenerate urban brownfield sites in the northern regions."

In its report Taylor Wimpey further states that, "The new Metropolitan Mayor, Andy Burnham has called for the plan to be redrafted to minimise Green Belt release and therefore it looks likely that the 10 GM authorities will be looking for even greater numbers within their urban areas. This will generate huge delivery challenges in these areas and unless the Mayor's position changes, this is likely to generate unmet need, which will need to be accommodated by the surrounding authorities, unless they can demonstrate and evidence that this is not achievable."

It is admirable that Rossendale wishes to ride to the rescue but is it really necessary for Council Planners to take it upon themselves to provide more houses than required. It was reported in the Rossendale Free Press on 21 September 2018 that the neighbouring

boroughs of Bury and Rochdale were willing to take on some of their housing quotas but this offer had been refused by Rossendale Borough Council.

Preserving the greenfield site bordered by Grane Road and Holcombe Road we believe would address the plea from Lancashire County Council put forward a number of years ago, outlined in their pamphlet 'Go Green For Good.' It stated, "Do you want to save the world but don't know where to start? This leaflet shows how you can do your bit in Lancashire to help save the planet. We can all help look after our everyday surroundings, landscape, wildlife, buildings and greenspaces. We live with them and we can have a greater say in what happens to them. Get to know your patch – do a Green Audit of your local area. Find out who's in charge of what. Be ready to act if there is a change you don't like. Form a local group, produce a newsletter, write to local newspapers. Get in touch with your parish council or community group and ask them what they are doing for the Environment."

As a community group Grane Residents' Association, formerly Save Grane, has carried out environmental projects and monitored unwelcome planning applications in the locality for the past **28** years. We care about our community and the area in which we live, and truly hope that consideration will be given to the concerns outlined in this document and in our response, dated 29 September 2018, to the Regulation 19 Consultation which outlines our concerns in relation to site H74.

We have an opportunity to retain our open views, countryside walks and wildlife habitats which enhance the health and wellbeing of residents. We urge you not to destroy them in order to provide housing, predominantly aimed at commuters.

Margaret Murray
26 August 2019

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The problem we have, as residents, is objecting to the development of site H74. Grane Residents Association (GRAss) submitted an 18 page document setting out their objections to the development of this site and as Chairman of GRAss I fully support these views. However further objections could arise when Taylor Wimpey submits their Planning Application for the site. It is totally wrong that they have been talking to the Planners since 2012 and as of today's date we do not know what their detailed plan for the site is. We have been set a number of dates where our objections have to be registered to avoid our views being ignored. And yet the developer with all the money, expertise and experience can casually say they will submit their plans for the site in the "Summer," and we will shortly be in September.

On the 6 June 2019 we attended a consultation meeting with the developer. We had been invited to what we were told was to be a pre-meeting with Councillors and the developer, prior to opening the event to the general public. When we arrived two Councillors were present, together with landowners who are selling their land. The developers presented their proposed plan of the site, which was a pretty picture but provided very little detail. Houses were shown all over the site but no details were given as to the size of the houses, particularly their height.

There are only eight dwellings which are directly adjacent to the 8.11 acre site. The residents in these eight dwellings have lived there, collectively for over 225 years. Their view of Tor and the green fields is of great importance to them.

I understand that appreciation of such views, experienced by one of the residents for over 60 years, cannot be taken into account in a planning application, but surely the housing layout of 150 houses over the 8.11 acre site should be sympathetic to the lifestyles of current residents, who have developed or are developing their gardens overlooking the site. And yet with the whole site at their disposal the developer's plan, shown at the consultation event, illustrates houses right up to the boundary of their back gardens, with no breathing space in between. By all means design should maximise the benefits for new residents but it should also take full account of residents who have lived there for 60, 50, 44, 33, 30 years. I believe a generous space between is not too much to ask for in order to maximise the morning views of Tor, grazing sheep and greenfields throughout the seasons, and that houses of a lower height should be situated at the top of the site with taller properties at the bottom. This would benefit everyone overlooking the site.

I realise that the developer's plan may change yet again before their planning application submitted, but in order to meet the 30 August deadline for comments I felt it necessary to voice these concerns.

Michael Murray MBE
26 August 2019