

Trough Laithe Overview

Cllr. Nike, Cllr. Stringer and the Clerk had a meeting with Ms. Fitzgerald last Wednesday to discuss the Council's comments to the Core Strategy. At this meeting it became clear that in Ms. Fitzgerald's opinion the Strategic Housing Site at Trough Laithe would be included and the only real option open to the Parish Council would be to fight for the best mitigation for the village.

This was already the feeling within the Council but as the outline planning application is imminent the only saving grace is the inclusion of physical and social infrastructure and education specifically into the Core Strategy relating to the Strategic Housing Site. The only downside is the addition of a clause where the 20% affordable homes could be dependent on an up to date viability study at the request of the developer and could see one of the key reasons for its inclusion as Strategic Site downgraded or removed altogether.

The main concern is that the higher the mitigation costs in section 106 agreements the lower the viability of each parcel of development land offered to house builders with less affordable houses being economically viable.

The range and scope of mitigation works will largely be dependent on Lancashire County Council's reports on highways including transport infrastructure, education and to some extent health and social services. The Borough Council can ask for section money for local projects such as play and open space, protection of local heritage features, footpaths and affordable housing.

Barrowford Parish Council will need to look carefully at which areas of mitigation will reduce the effects of such a large development on Barrowford and where possible improve the present situation. The major objections to come from the Peel Development open day were:

1. Why is such a large green field site being developed?
2. Additional traffic causing further congestion particularly on the bypass and at Junction 13.
3. Lack of school places within Barrowford particularly in the 5 to 11 year old bracket.
4. Destruction of the village feel with this number of new houses.
5. Concerns regarding this site opening the floodgates to further development within Barrowford.

In consideration of the above points the following should be considered:

1. The answer to question 1 lies with Pendle Borough Council as the planning authority and authors and architects of the local Core Strategy and at face value there is a need for a strategic site within the M65. The planners decided on Trough Laithe as the most suitable for inclusion at the submission stage. Contrary to the Parish Council's opinions at the Public Inquiry the Inspector endorsed their reasons and including the Strategic Site.

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2. Lancashire County Council has found funding from other sources to improve junction 13. These works are likely to be carried out in the next 6 months and should improve traffic flow at peak times through the roundabouts. The improvements at other motorway junctions such as Gannow Top have increased traffic flow significantly. This work will be cited as mitigation for the increased level of vehicles generated by 490 homes.

The long term prognosis is that the initial improvements in traffic flow created by this County Council scheme will slowly be stifled over the next decade whilst the strategic site is developed and inhabited with the possible argument that the current problems have not been increased. This may be true if the only development envisaged was this but when taken in conjunction with the outstanding completion of the Riverside Business Park and the proposed extension of the Lomeshaye industrial estate with partial access onto the Padiham Bypass the reality may be different.

3. Lancashire County Council has built several new schools within Nelson and the Head of Planning at Pendle alluded to at the Public Inquiry that children from Trough Laithe would attend these schools. The reality is that many modern day house purchasers with young children research what school catchment areas the property falls within and buy accordingly.

The reality is that Barrowford's two schools are either fully subscribed or oversubscribed Lancashire CC will look at the larger picture within Pendle to make its comments and section requests. The fact is that quite a number of existing places at Barrowford schools are taken by children from outside Barrowford and that given the sibling rules could take a number of years to revert back to Barrowford children. Even when these potential places are ironed out there will probably be a shortfall within Barrowford, but as sections of Trough Laithe will also fall within the catchment area of certain Nelson based schools, the County council could justifiably say that there is adequate provision.

4. "Village feel" is a sense of place and wellbeing and by and large is an ideal not met by reality. This is borne out by the fact that at any point in the last one hundred years Barrowford has seen housing development come to the village but has survived. This is just the latest and by far the largest. Barrowford Parish Council needs to ensure that the best infrastructure mitigation and the highest quality of housing design and materials are used to promote Barrowford rather than detract from what is existing.
5. Other largescale development within Barrowford are in the offing as part of the M65 Corridor, but as a Local Service Area the Parish Council can mount a limited defence but this could be enhanced by a Neighbourhood Plan which when fully adopted has similar planning powers as the Core Strategy but cannot be in direct opposition of Core Strategy. This said the lower tier level of Barrowford could be used to work in Barrowford's favour in relation to future large scale developments.

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As the Clerk sat writing this report Peel Developments dropped off a hard copy of their application for outline planning permission.

This report does not intend to convey the Parish Councils thoughts but tries to give a rational overview with an outsider's perspective of the current situation. It is up to the Parish Council to decide what mitigation it would wish to see at both County and Borough Level and ensure that its case is presented in the best way so as to be included in Section 106 agreements at the Outline Application stage.