

Extraordinary, Council
Wednesday, 25th August 2021 (6.00 p.m.)

SUBMISSIONS FROM PUBLIC SPEAKERS

1. David Morgan (Lancaster Civic Society)..... p.2
2. Kevan Walton (Ashton-with-Stodday Parish Council)..... p.4
3. Babs Walker (CLOUD)..... p.6
4. Dr Emily Heath..... p.8
5. Noel Cass..... p.10
6. Peter Mather (Ellel Parish Council)..... p.12
7. Charles Ainger..... p.14

1. David Morgan (Lancaster Civic Society)

The decision before the Council this evening is one of the most far reaching that has ever been taken. Lancaster Civic Society are extremely disappointed about the lack of public consultation over the far-reaching implications of signing the legally binding Partnership Agreement. There has been a failure on the part of the City Council to provide sufficient opportunity for proper and meaningful engagement with the local community on this most important matter.

We fully appreciate the choice that the Council faces is an extremely complex and difficult one and that the resolution of many long-standing transportation issues depend on the receipt of this funding. We also understand that a failure to guarantee the provision of these transport improvements, particularly the works to Junction 33, is likely to render the Garden Village undeliverable, wrecking the Council's projected housing delivery numbers.

A properly managed public consultation exercise would have provided an opportunity for the City Council to clearly articulate this dilemma and to properly explain to people the trade-offs involved. A failure to do so has meant that only a relatively small percentage of citizens are fully aware of what is at stake tonight.

We believe that in the absence of a proper public engagement exercise it would be wrong for the Council to take a decision either way tonight. Your job as our elected representatives is to do what is in the best interests of the community overall. How can you possibly discharge this responsibility in the absence of an understanding of what the entire community of Lancaster think, not just the limited numbers you have engaged to date?

In our Open Statement, which has been sent to all councillors, we set out our concerns at length. I assume that you have taken the time to read our Open Statement and do not intend to repeat all of these points. However, I do want to make a few other observations.

We have been advised that elected members did not become aware until March of the details of the HIF bid. As this matter was reported to Cabinet on the 8th June we cannot understand why it took until August for the City Council to undertake the most rudimentary consultation. To date the only opportunity for public engagement with the City Council on this critical issue has been two Teams sessions, the first lasting 70 minutes, the second an hour. At both sessions there were significant numbers of questions from the public that could not be addressed in the time available.

This is too little too late.

Since the publication of our Open Statement we have heard a number of reasons cited for this lack of adequate consultation, none of which we find convincing. It is particularly disappointing that a Council, that has previously made such vocal commitments to meaningful community engagement should act in this way.

The Cabinet report of 8th June provided an important opportunity for the City Council to properly articulate, in a public document, the arguments for and against signing the legally binding Partnership Agreement, particularly with regard to the obligation to facilitate over 9000 new homes. Incredibly the public report was silent on this matter. The Options Appraisal contained in the public report was in our view superficial for an issue of this magnitude. We hope that the exempt appendix contained a more robust analysis for Cabinet members to consider

Had the public report to Cabinet dealt with this issue there would have been ample time to consult on the matter before making a final decision prior to the deadline of 31st August. We do not understand why the Council did not do this. The manner in which this issue has been dealt with falls very short of the City Council's previous commitment to "meaningful engagement and discussion".

We appreciate that the Council has been advised that it must sign the legally binding Partnership Agreement by 31st August. However, we understand that the County Council has agreed with Homes England that it has until 2027 to spend the HIF grant. We therefore cannot understand what possible impediment there is to Homes England and the County Council agreeing a short extension to the current deadline of 30th August, to allow time for meaningful consultation.

As I said earlier we believe that in the absence of a proper public engagement exercise it would be wrong for the Council to take a decision either way tonight. It is critical that the decision is postponed so that your actions are informed by a proper understanding of what the entire community of Lancaster think, not just the limited numbers you have engaged to date. Surely this is what local democracy is all about.

We would therefore urge the City Council to defer taking a decision tonight to allow time for a public consultation exercise commensurate with the magnitude of this matter to the future of our city.

Thank you for listening.

2. Mr Kevan Walton (Ashton-with-Stodday Parish Council)

I am Kevan Walton, a resident of Stodday, South Lancaster. I am representing Aldcliffe-with-Stodday Parish Council, a Parish which will be severely affected by the proposed Bailrigg Garden Village of 5,000 houses, let alone the effect of almost doubling this to over 9,000 houses. This larger development will house 25,000-30,000 people, approximately half the current population of Lancaster City. Where is the need?

A recent housing stock survey identified an excess of brownfield land in the North West of England so why do we need to destroy our beautiful countryside when there is enough brownfield land in the region. The appeal of the proposed £10,000 roof tax on dwellings in South Lancaster will discourage brownfield development and render redundant other more suitable sites in the rest of the city district.

The process which you may embark upon tonight is putting the cart before the horse if you accept Homes England's offer of £140m to facilitate a vast estate of over 9000 houses. Surely the correct procedure is to identify the housing need then work from that, not to work back from a sum of money on offer and equate that to a number of houses by some obscure formula, needed or not. The need to by-pass Galgate is not disputed but should be justified based on that need without the addition of unnecessary housing and there are other regulatory means to provide the other infrastructure required.

You would be committing the City Council to housing which has not been subject to the rigors of the Local Plan procedure and therefore this arrangement will determine the housing provision to be included in 2 further Local Plan cycles after the current plan. How can you commit to this?

The economic case appears fraught with risk. For example, there is no guarantee that these houses will actually be needed and built, in which case not enough 'rooftax' will materialise and future Lancaster citizens will be left with the debt burden. No matter what the assurances are that the City and County will be burdened with no more than £20million debt, this is still a vast amount and there will be great pressure to provide the housing on which the funding depends.

Will developers have the right to appeal against the 'rooftax' or reduce it? (Developers have been let off the Affordable Housing Levy on the flimsiest of evidence). What happens if the costs spiral? Who carries the overspend? What gets de-scoped to save money and what impact will that have on the whole 'vision'? If there aren't enough local jobs, which seems likely, then most of these houses will simply be meeting the needs of Preston, Blackburn, etc. with little economic and social regeneration benefit for Lancaster, which would amount to being a very poor investment by our City Council.

Our concern is that the City Council has lacked transparency, ignored local knowledge and input and is being led by the bait of the HIF £140m rather than by a clear and open vision and plan that optimises the benefit for, and has the broad support of, current citizens and the generations to come. The leader of the City Council has said that “it is going to be the biggest decision this council has made in probably 20 or 30 years”; and yet there has been no consultation, no compelling case published and no democratic mandate.

No suitable area of land has been identified to accommodate the additional 4,000+ houses (as far as we know) and densities in the proposed Bailrigg development are already high. Will the promised open land and retained woodland of the current proposal be sacrificed and will the net widen west as far as the Lune Estuary, destroying the jewel in the crown of the drumlin sculptured countryside around Lancaster? How will traffic be accommodated and how long will it be before the Western By -Pass is on the cards again and the algorithm wheeled out once more to equate its cost to even more housing?

The green fields around our City are invaluable to it's residents and have been particularly important to their mental and physical well-being over the last 18 months of the Covid pandemic. There is no good argument to justify the proposed despoliation of this asset other than to kow-tow to a Government bribe! Have we forgotten community, local democracy and respect for the environment? What is more; can we afford it?

We urge you to vote against the proposal

3. Mrs Barbara Walker (CLOUD)

On 23rd June, when the South Lancaster Growth Catalyst and the Housing Infrastructure Fund bid were last considered here, the Council Leader described this as the most important decision for the City in a generation. She also said that the views of local residents should be taken into account - and that is why I am addressing you on behalf of the many members of CLOUD - **Citizens of Lancaster Opposed to Unnecessary Development** .

We welcomed the public briefing sessions arranged by Council earlier this month. These provided an opportunity to ask questions. However each session was only 1 hour long and too many answers were evasive or unconvincing. There have been no other such sessions since the HIF bid was announced back in March 2020. Lancashire County Council has provided no public briefings at all. However welcome they were, the briefings raised more questions than they answered.

Now to the substance of my address :-

- **Point 1 : We are now considering not a Garden Village but a New Town in South Lancaster.**

The HIF bid claims to unlock up to 9185 new houses. This equates to a new town of 30,000 inhabitants - about the size of Kendal. However the Local Plan, agreed only last year, refers only to around 3,500 houses. Unanswered questions include : Why this change, where are 30,000 new inhabitants coming from?

- **Point 2 : The HIF bid brings Liabilities not Benefits**

It is claimed that HIF funding will **unlock** house building in South Lancaster. However, it covers just over half the infrastructure costs, leaving £23M to be funded from Council funds and unconfirmed grants and £98M from developer contributions - that is from the house-builders in the form of a roof tax. Such contributions are by no means guaranteed and so there is a real risk of the City and council tax payers being **locked into** repayment obligations.

- **Point 3 : The Sums Don't Add Up!**

We were told in the briefing sessions that 9185 is the number of houses required to generate the £98M roof tax needed for the South Lancaster infrastructure costs - this would be a roof tax of over £10,000 per house. However, these infrastructure figures are taken directly from the Local Plan which provided school places and health services for just 3500 new houses. 9185 houses need more school places and health services - and so there is a funding gap. At the briefing sessions we were told that 9185 was purely 'a business case figure' and that this number of houses might

never be built. In this case, with fewer than 9185 houses, roof tax receipts would fall - once again leaving a funding gap.

- **Point 4 : Climate Emergency Declaration**

The HIF bid simply fails to address the Climate Emergency issue. We understand that others are going to speak on this topic so we will leave this to them.

- **Point 5 : Highways England**

Highways England has repeatedly raised substantive objections to development proposals for south Lancaster. These have not been answered.

- **Conclusion : A Leap in the Dark?**

In 5 minutes we have been unable to fully cover all our concerns and questions - full details on all these is contained in the briefing note we have sent to all Councillors.

It is clear that risks and uncertainties are high, questions remain unanswered and too little time has been allowed for public debate. A rushed decision cannot be a sensible one. Therefore, we encourage you to withhold your agreement from the HIF bid this evening please.

Thank you for listening to my address.

4. Dr. Emily Heath

Address to Lancaster City Council about the proposed South Lancaster HIF and development of 9,185 new houses

I am a former City Councillor for Scotforth West (1999-2011). From 1997 onwards I led the 'Stop the Sprawl' campaign against the Council's Local Plan proposal to build 535 houses on Whinney Carr Farm, next to the railway line south of Scotforth. At that time there were several large brownfield sites in our district that were in desperate need of redevelopment, but developers were more interested in building on farmland because they could make much bigger profits. We finally defeated that proposal in 2003 after 3 public inquiries, by demonstrating that it was unnecessary, unwanted and unsustainable. Those fields are still green today, but now earmarked as part of BGV.

My concerns at that time were mainly about extra traffic and CO₂ emissions, and I'm even more concerned today. TRICS data from similar edge-of-town developments across the UK showed that each new home generated an average of more than 8 car trips per day. Whinney Carr alone would have generated more than 4,000 daily car trips from 535 houses. Multiply that by 17 to scale up to the size of BGV that is currently being contemplated.

I commuted to work at Lancaster University by bike and bus for 30 years. I know first-hand how congested, polluted and dangerous the A6 and other local roads are. It was already bad in the 1990s but has got even worse as car ownership has steadily increased. I remain very sceptical that the City and County Councils are committed to or capable of delivering new developments that are not highly car-dependent. Building 9,000 new homes close to a motorway junction and miles away from a train station is bound to create a dormitory town for commuting by car to Preston and Manchester.

Partly as a result of our successful campaign against greenfield sprawl, many of Lancaster's brownfield sites have been developed in the last 20 years, and I do accept there is a stronger case now for a certain amount of development on fields to the South of Lancaster. However, I am not convinced that there is a genuine need for the 3,500 houses at Bailrigg Garden Village proposed in the Local Plan. Many local residents responded to the public consultations to argue against such a large scale of development. Despite this, the Council adopted the Local Plan last year.

We were horrified to find out only a few weeks ago that a plan had been produced by Council officers and the last two Labour leaders of the Council to nearly triple the size of BGV to 9,185 houses! This has never been subject to meaningful public consultation.

When the Council listens to local residents, it makes better decisions. I urge all Councillors to reflect upon other disastrous developments that were enthusiastically promoted by Council officers and leading Labour Councillors until campaigns by local residents forced a rethink.

1990s – A £90 million Western Bypass through the Lune Estuary and rural Scotforth, which would have included a 500-space car park on Freeman’s Wood.

2000s - A ‘big box’ retail park on the Canal Corridor in partnership with Centros Miller and later British Land, which local residents feared would kill off the City Centre. It was proposed to include a huge multi-story car park, and a 60% increase in retail floor space in Lancaster, including a Debenhams ‘anchor store’ (Debenhams went in to liquidation last year with the loss of 12,000 jobs). Thanks to a long-running community-led campaign, we at last in 2021 have a sustainable plan for the Canal Quarter that is in-keeping with the historic character and needs of Lancaster.

I also urge reflection on how much was promised and how little was delivered by the County Council when it finally went ahead with building the £140 million Heysham-M6 link road, ignoring the abundant evidence that new roads generate more traffic. There were assurances that sustainable transport measures would be integral to the scheme, but all that has materialised is a Park & Ride which from October 2016 to May 2021 had only 2 buses per hour. The promised reallocation of road space to buses, pedestrians and cyclists never happened, and now we are told that this can only happen if we agree to another £140 million road building scheme!

How can we trust that BGV can deliver ‘sustainable development’? The costs don’t add up, and developers and local Councils have a poor track record. We already need more school places, more GPs, more affordable homes, better bus services and much less traffic - without adding 30,000 new residents in one part of the district. Let’s tackle those existing problems first, and avoid creating a whole load of new ones with a rushed decision to expand Lancaster too much and too fast, just because the Government has dangled a large sum of money in front of your eyes.

Please don’t ruin Lancaster because you believe that rejecting the HIF will result in an even worse outcome. It won’t. Please send a message to the Government and the County Council that tackling a climate emergency means doing things differently, not business as usual.

5. Dr Noel Cass

Submission to the Lancaster City Council meeting

It seems weird to base arguments on laws rather than the obviousness of the climate emergency that I have been campaigning about for 30 years, and which is now obvious to everyone through the climate and weather chaos we see on the news daily, but it is worth starting by pointing out that the UK has a *legal* commitment to Net Zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050. This will require carbon capture and storage at a massive level – at the moment, there is none. [I ran an international workshop on CCS in Westminster in 2011] It will require huge technological shifts in electricity generation, home heating and insulation, and particularly transport. This is creaking into action, decades too late [I have worked on renewable energy, building design for energy efficiency, and low carbon transport]. But even if these massive challenges *were* being tackled, meeting the carbon reductions required by the Paris Agreement would require reductions in *household* energy consumption – that is, the energy we all use in our homes, in our everyday lives, and in the travel we do – of 83-95% in countries like the UK. There is no sign that this is happening, as people’s lives are shaped by their houses: ever bigger, ever further from schools, shops, and workplaces, and fuelled by gas and gas-powered electricity; *and* by their use of cars to stitch together their lives.

For the 40 years that the oil companies along with the world’s scientists have known that global warming was the inevitable consequence of burning fossil fuels, the UK has *appeared* to stabilise and reduce its carbon emissions, while those emissions have *actually* shifted abroad along with the manufacture of goods. Ignoring flights, even land transport emissions keep rising year on year as cars get larger, outstripping continuous improvements in energy efficiency. In recent research I did with high-consuming households, one man pointed out that he had “done everything that he could” to reduce energy use in his home, by replacing his light bulbs with LEDs. “How many?” I asked. “120 of them” was the answer.

My point is this. Current policies to reduce energy and carbon focus on *efficiency* and on behaviour change: *asking* people to use less energy or to buy the more efficient gizmo. But energy use keeps increasing with every new device, every new car (electric or not) and particularly every new home. The majority of those household emissions are out of the hands of individuals, and all to do with the physical infrastructures of urban areas. The building sector itself admits that buildings generate nearly 40% of annual global greenhouse gas emissions; materials and construction, 11%. Homes are responsible for 27% of UK CO₂ emissions. And we have known since the SACTRA report of 1994 that new roads *do* generate more traffic. Huge amounts of new housing attached to new roads schemes will make the job of achieving our legally required carbon emission reductions infinitely more difficult, in other words, impossible.

I know that the Lancaster Public Space and Movement Strategy proposes a number of road changes to tackle car use, increasing roadspace for cycles and public transport. I

was involved with proposing research to help reduce car use *with* the County Council transport planners. However, these measures now appear to be tied to the HIF money – to developing enormous, greenfield site housing estates. Suburban sprawl like this is intrinsically car dependent. Lancaster has a huge advantage over other towns and cities in the UK because it is relatively dense, and it has a greenbelt preventing urban sprawl and making life worth living. It has a corridor along which most commuter and other traffic flows, perfect for bus and tram lines. It has some congestion, which is the main thing which restricts increases in car use. All of these advantages would be squandered by committing to the huge levels of housing increases on greenfield sites. Every new estate would establish new, higher levels of energy consumption, and the residents would settle into car-based lifestyles, in *advance* of the necessary investments in low carbon transport measures, which would be puny in comparison. Making the city centre more pedestrianised will not reduce car use if people are moving further out of the town centre to estates with garages and parking.

In other words, on the basis of every bit of research and writing I have done for the last 20 years since doing my PhD on Local Authority Responses to Climate Change, on energy from buildings and from transport in everyday life, and on how energy demand is shaped by infrastructures rather than by individual choices, committing to a huge extension of Lancaster's urban area, into greenfield land, over 3 times in advance of even the most generous definition of housing need, flies in the face of everything that needs to be done to first slow and then reverse the growth of energy consumption and carbon emissions. It is the abandoning of a hope for our children's generation that they will have a liveable environment. I urge the council to reject this deal which ties the city into massively increasing carbon emissions at the moment when the eyes of the world are on the UK to lead the way on tackling climate change. I have little hope that the national government will do this, but it is Local Authorities across the world who have the power, and must be the ones to change the direction of society.

6. Peter Mather (Ellel Parish Council)

My name is Peter Mather and I am the Vice-Chair of Ellel Parish Council. In the consideration of the Bailrigg Garden Village proposal, my address this evening is neither a pledge of support nor a protest of objection. My address this evening is specifically in the context of advice with respect to the Government Housing Infrastructure Fund offer of £140m infrastructure contribution in exchange for a commitment to build a minimum of 9185 homes.

As a consultant in Sustainable Development, I support businesses every day to interpret, analyse and substantiate complex decisions. I advise and guide my clients that the analysis should be considered in terms of *facts, forecasts and risk*, with the context and impact of the decision determining the risk bias.

The emphasis on the importance of the analysis phase cannot be overstated. The adage that 'Rubbish In = Rubbish Out' holds as true today as it ever has done. Accurate and comprehensive understanding of the decision parameters has a direct correlation on the effectiveness of the decision reached. And time and money invested in interpreting, understanding and developing strategy to aid decision-making is exponentially lower than that of the cost of re-addressing retrospectively the implications of a poor decision made in haste. This has been demonstrated throughout industry and society many, many times over.

Council decisions, such as this one before us, most often have widespread and significant implications with Economic, Social and Environmental impacts that will shape the future and bind the council for many generations. It is therefore essential that adequate and proportional time is assigned to analysis prior to decision making.

As you will be hearing this evening in detail from fellow councillors and others, the government financial offer before you in its current state, is lacking in key facts, forecasting and risk assessment. It is a conditional based offer whereby the full terms and conditions are not fully presented and therefore it is simply not possible to analyse with a high level of assurance of the outcomes. Decisions in favour on these limited terms could only be made largely in faith and with significant accepted risk. Given the context and impact, to do this could best be described as daring and at worst, reckless, neither of which I would advise as appropriate strategies when managing public finance and planning.

What limited analysis that can be undertaken, shows that the scale of the development proposed by the government is significantly at odds with that defined and established within the adopted Local Plan. Furthermore, it is understood that the Local Plan itself is currently under review in the context of the climate emergency declared in 2019 and it could also be argued, should be widened further still to include an assessment of the impact of the recent Coronavirus pandemic, given the far-reaching and lasting implications both these events will have on society, the environment and the economy.

It is my advice, therefore, to the council, from the information before me in the government proposal and the strategic position of the council as described, to reject the offer in its current form simply on the basis of a lack of information and time to allow appropriate analysis. It cannot be established whether the £140m is a short-term enabling benefit or long-term financial liability. I would strongly recommend the council complete the Local Plan review and set a sustainable development strategy that aligns with the 'new norms' before considering any large-scale planning decisions.

7. Charles Ainger

Speaking against the 9000 houses J33 road scheme

My name is Charles Ainger, I live in Halton. I speak from the point of view of a retired professional civil engineer. I planned, designed and built public utilities and infrastructure for most of my career. I urge you to say NO to the HIF proposal; because:

- it represents the worst kind of bad planning mistake
 - it does not serve Lancaster's social, economic and environmental needs
 - you can develop an alternative to replace it
 - it is not needed for a successful revised Local Plan. Let me explain:
- You prepared the Local Plan, which included, for the area South of Lancaster, old 'Business as Usual' car use assumptions and traffic projections, to work out the traffic infrastructure needed. This was before Covid and before the Climate Emergency – neither were taken into account. Now, the large scale and cost implications of that approach have come back, in the form of this 9000 houses J33 HIF grant offer. It shows that that the costs and housing numbers needed to justify that solution are totally out of proportion [about x 3], not in any way justified by Lancaster's real social need.
 - Since an infrastructure scheme must serve real need, not the other way round, the right planning reaction is to reject that solution, and work up the 'Plan B' alternative. Plan B is to seriously apply all the new policies and standards written into your draft LP CE review document - for modal shift, reduced car use, more public transport approaches, etc, etc - and manage road traffic demand down. You should also see if you can now reduce the new green field housing that you need to put in South Lancaster, by using the opportunity of converting for housing the new, post Covid empty office and empty retail space predictions for Lancaster centre? I understand that none of these approaches have been applied to the S Lancaster plan, so far?
 - Instead of this proper planning response, to accept the 9000 homes J33 HIF scheme offer would turn proper infrastructure planning on its head – allowing the size of the scheme that someone has decided you want, to justify how much development to build – the worst planning mistake. I cannot think of a more wrongheaded example of how NOT to do infrastructure planning.

So, you have a momentous choice: are you going to take the CE seriously, and change things; or are you going to just pay lip service to it?

- If you say YES to the 9000 houses J33 HIF proposal, you align yourselves, and LCC and its reputation, with a traffic scheme which is part of the last gasp of a discredited national roads policy, totally based on BAU, ignoring the Climate Emergency and the latest IPCC warnings. It is being challenged in court, and is likely to have been

abandoned nationally well before you ever start work on the project. You will show that your CE commitment is just words, and destroy everyone's belief in your willingness to really take the actions required by your CE declaration.

- If you say NO to the HIF proposal, you give yourselves the time to take the proper planning approach and work up Plan B, applying all the opportunities that your Local Plan CE review ideas can bring to this large part of your Local Plan, and feed that solution into your final revised Plan. And you will show – to yourselves and everyone else - that you are serious on the CE.

Furthermore, as you make that difficult choice – to really change direction – your example will help create the confidence, energy, momentum, and culture to empower everyone in our region to start making, themselves, the many large changes that we all need to make. You will show real public leadership. So, please, say NO. Thank you