

Planning Control
Development and Regeneration
Town Hall
Bolton
BL1 1RU

Your reference: 94696/15

Monday, 17th August 2015

S.W.A.N. OBJECTION TO DEVELOPMENT AT LEE HALL

Dear Sir,

We are writing with our objections to the application to build 300 houses at Lee Hall, Westhoughton.

1. We are opposed for a number of reasons, not least being that there is no need for this development. Bolton Council has established that it has an adequate supply of Housing Land to meet the Government's 5-year requirement, and can also deliver the required number of houses in its Core Strategy. Thus Lee Hall was not allocated for housing in the Allocations Plan as per the adopted Local Plan; it remains Protected Open Land.

The consultation process took place over a number of years – S.W.A.N. being involved in that process – it was acknowledged that Westhoughton had borne the brunt of development in previous years:

Inspector's Report (17th December 2011) concluded:

[62] *"No major change is proposed for Westhoughton, and so the Green Belt and Protected Open Land around the town will be retained. Any development on this open land would contravene national and local policies for its protection, and would undermine sound spatial strategy. This approach accords with the views of local residents who consider that development in the town has outstripped the infrastructure upon which it relies."*

The Local Development Framework (LDF) was further scrutinised in 2014 in light of the National Planning Policy Framework with the Planning Inspector, Kevin Ward dealing with developer claims of inadequate supply concurring with the Council, such that the Local Plan (formerly LDF) was, with minor amendments, declared sound (5th September 2014), and was able to be formally adopted by Bolton Council in December 2014. (Allocations within Westhoughton sufficient, with the possibility of windfall brownfield sites, and key areas of protected open land maintained.)

2. The proposals are contrary to the allocation of the site as 'Other Protected Open Land' in adopted Bolton Allocations Plan and specifically Policy CGAP6.

If this development is allowed to go ahead, it will give a 'green light' for further development on this site; it is well known that Peel Holdings – with developer partners submitting proposals during the 2014 examination – want to build up to 1700 houses across Lee Hall. This would also set a precedent for development on other key protected open land sites around Westhoughton.

3. 300 houses will mean that up to an extra 600 cars will be added to what are already extremely congested roads. It can regularly take up to half an hour or more at rush hour to journey from Daisy Hill to Chequerbent roundabout – even much longer in bad weather, due to accidents or any roadworks to key routes. An extra junction on the Chequerbent roundabout, together with additional traffic flows also onto Platt Lane/Park Road, with extended journey times/increased stress, will only add to potential incidents at these known Accident Black Spots. Notwithstanding the additional pollution, noise and general disturbance to residents.

Persimmon state that the site is well served by Public Transport; this is certainly not the case. Neither Daisy Hill nor Westhoughton railway stations are nearby and people would not walk to them when going to work (car parks already at over-capacity). Moreover, any bus services running from Westhoughton to Bolton or Wigan get caught in the same traffic jams.

4. It is both well known and widely accepted that open green land sites such as Lee Hall provide very important benefits to local communities. They act as a buffer to prevent towns merging creating an urban sprawl; Green Belt can be the ‘green lungs’ – a term regularly used – for the local population. As such Lee Hall helps to maintain Westhoughton’s individuality, character and sense of community; and prevents it sprawling into neighbouring towns.

In addition, Lee Hall provides habitat and space for a wide and varied amount of wildlife which enriches and enhances our environment – for many people of Westhoughton this is a very high priority on their list of objections to this development.

5. Over recent years Westhoughton has experienced a high level of development such as the former Metal Box site. This was a former brownfield site and as such no objection was made (by S.W.A.N.), however, in the application a new Doctors surgery was to be opened which was never provided. In our experience promises made at the planning stage don’t always materialise – nor can they be relied upon or delivered. There is a real strain on services such as schools and health resources – a further 300 houses just adds to the problem.
6. Any arguments suggesting that the development will provide employment opportunities are misleading. Any employment gain is only for a limited period (during construction) – and is not necessarily of local benefit – and does not provide long term stable employment for the local community.

SWAN recognises and understands the need to supply land for Housing, Employment, Retail, etc. We have been supportive of Bolton Council in the development of the Core Strategy and Local Plan. Thus we have always taken a considered, careful and circumspect about which development sites we object to, and which sites should be protected – Lee Hall is just such a site.

Yours sincerely,

The Secretary
On behalf of the S.W.A.N. Committee