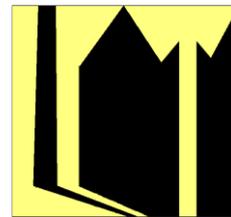


Littleborough Civic Trust



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Littleborough Civic Trust statement on planning matters

The Littleborough Civic Trust, keeping the interests of local residents at heart, have drafted the following article. We hope to raise awareness of ongoing and upcoming plans for the villages we live in and how the LCT intends to fight alongside residents for a say over the direction of local developments.

To begin it is worth mentioning the local greenbelt group “Smithy Bridge & Littleborough: Save the Greenbelt” have made significant leaps in raising awareness and engagement with residents and have noted significant appetite to fight the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework Plan. So, we hope this article is met with similar support.

It is also worth note this article takes information from numerous sources to provide you with the most up-to-date and accurate statistics available, which will be cited if you so wish to read further. The intention is not to scaremonger and if that is the resultant effect we apologise in advance; however, this is the unfortunate scenario our village currently faces.

There are several current development strategies in place across Littleborough and Smithybridge, which should be noted. For quick reference we have attached the number of homes suggested by each development plan:

Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 Executive summary

Proposed major and minor developments **544+**

Rochdale Rail Corridor Strategy **1845**

The Greater Manchester Spatial Framework **510**

When looking at ongoing/proposed development plans of the local area we first need to understand the local infrastructure challenges we are faced with. As both a resident using roads to commute but also on a greater scale as a village traversed by those around us. The infrastructure is a much bigger issue for our villages than simply roads being congested during warm bank holiday weekends or commuting to and from work/school. It is healthcare provision for the area, it is local schools for local children, it is local shops and the ability to travel on the train or bus from home to the town centre or further afield. These plans will be even more detrimental to emergency response times which are already significantly above average.

The Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040: Executive Summary outlines plans to make significant improvements to GM's infrastructure which primarily covers roads and rail, which of course is fantastic news. Unfortunately, these infrastructure improvements only reach as far as Albert Royds Street and as such does not include the rural villages of Rochdale Borough. There is almost a figurative line that has been drawn, cutting us off from these improvements.

At a public meeting, 7th February 2019 (held at Hare Hill House) when the 2040 ES document was released, a council officer stated to LCT representatives "We know Littleborough needs 'something', we just don't know what". Littleborough Civic Trust suggest more autonomy around the village's direction would be a good start. Local people planning the local area to ensure a more robust and tailored solution, rather than a one-size-fits all approach. Anecdotally it's like hand me down clothes, it may eventually fit, but by then it'll likely have a few holes in it.

The recent press release regarding the "leaked" GMSF states: -

"And the number of homes proposed for the Roch Valley, in Littleborough, has been scaled back still further – from 210 to 200 – having been earmarked for 300 properties in the original 2016 draft.

According to the new GMSF, the scheme should be designed to allow for the eastern section of a proposed residential relief road between Smithy Bridge Road and Albert Royds Street.

Improvements to walking and cycling in the area – including links to public transport connections – are also included in the proposals."

The provision of a residential relief road is an attempt to reduce the traffic congestion on the area's roads which are at capacity and beyond. It is on record, which can be verified by the LCT, that Councillors informed the Developers' agent that if the relief road was not provided then they would not get planning permission.

Regular users of Smithy Bridge Road already experience severe delays when the level crossing barriers are down and Network Rail commented on this at the original public consultation, held by Taylor Wimpey, at Smithybridge Methodist Chapel. Has anyone considered the additional problems encountered when the M62 is closed or when flooding occurs on Smithy Bridge Road or the road is barely passable in icy conditions?

Smithy Bridge Road is an unclassified road already having to cope with 'A' road capacity.

As things stand, Hollingworth Lake Country Park (the jewel in the crown of Rochdale) and the picturesque villages surrounding it are being left to twist in the wind. The visitor centre has been sold off to the RSPCA by Link 4 Life (RMBC), leaving established organisations who called it home uncertain of their future.

When we delve into proposed major and minor developments in the area, we cannot underestimate the number of homes this will add to the infrastructure burden we already see. The main subject for this section is the New Street site, with its proposed 110 or 102 new homes. The recent reduction of the original proposal should not be considered a 'win' resultant from local objections and lobbying, but in fact a decision made by the developers upon realisation of significant challenges the land has presented. Flooding of the area has left the new plans identifying 'only 10 of the proposed 102 new homes to be at significant risk of flooding'.

Desperate attempts have been made on the site during its landscaping to reduce flooding, including pumping the water into the river Roch. Most recent planning requests show the developer requesting permission to cap the artesian well on the site, though this does raise the concern, where will that water go? The village now experiences regular flooding, but not forgetting, one Christmas defined as a 'once in a lifetime event'

The LCT work continuously and tirelessly with the National Flood Forum and Environment Agency to attempt to improve the flooding situation in Littleborough; working with Universities and local residents to try to provide emergency support when necessary.

Though there is a significant focus to protect greenbelt/green spaces in the area we cannot ignore plans that have already been permitted for the brownfield site formerly Akzo, on Hollingworth Road. This land was already purchased by Homes England (formerly the Government's Housing and Communities Agency) at the cost of £10M to the public, following a request to do so by Rochdale Council.

The initial planning application to develop the site included 174 homes. LCT engaged with Homes England in May 2018 to inform them of the local history of the site regarding possible contamination and more importantly noting the extensive mining works beneath the site; some not registered with the Coal Authority but clearly visible on historic maps.

LCT has maintained engagement to date, and H.E. have yet to dispose of the site to a developer. The latest information is that that H.E. have been informed by Rochdale Council that it will be left to the Developer to decide whether or not to provide affordable homes on this site. The Council are willing to accept a 'contribution to off- site development'. We are further advised that should a developer not be willing to make a contribution of affordable housing then HE will 'take a hit on the land value' i.e. just reduce the book cost for the site. Please don't forget this land is owned by the public and is due to go to tender this month.

A 'viability report' will not be required as the Developer will be "working to policy".

H.E. do envisage a new full planning application being submitted.

What scope there is on Hollingworth Road for the congestion associated with a residential development on this site is still up for debate, however the only traffic assessment carried out here was in 2005 and submitted with the original outline planning application and as such this report can only be considered redundant!

Due to Covid-19 and the resultant effect on traffic the LCT has inquired and subsequently been informed that RMBC's Highways Department have agreed traffic figures with Homes England using the projections for a nearby development at New Street, increasing the figures using a multiplier. Any comparison between the A58 and B6225 would be erroneous and the trip rates produced from the TRICS database will be scrutinised.

The two fields above the AKZO site, plus the current car park have already been scoped out by Bloor Homes for another 350 homes and possibly a primary school (if there is money left over to do so). Just how can the area sustain all these developments?

Hollingworth Road alone would be rendered impassable; in fact, it was almost as such, until recently when RBMC added double yellow lines, following much campaigning by local residents when buses were struggling to use the road.

Another series of sites extend outside of Littleborough's boundaries. Proposed developments on Wildhouse Lane, within Milnrow and to the east of Rochdale would have significant impact on the infrastructure especially during the times of unfortunate closures of the M62, diverting traffic through the village but not only this, the tourism traffic which our local businesses depend on in peak season. We want tourism to continue and we want the village to continue to be used by our neighbours, but the unfortunate realisation is that if people cannot get in, they will simply stop coming. As Littleborough and Smithybridge are part of the feeder route to and from Junction 21 of the M62, the difficulties we face would also impact on areas around the villages too, such as Todmorden. So, we urge you to once again to remind yourself of the inadequate infrastructure both existing and proposed for the area.

To further compound on the negative impact proposals ostensibly would have, a local resident and Rochdale councillor, John Blundell is championing the Rochdale Rail Corridor Strategy, which aims to add a further 1000 homes near to Smithybridge Rail Station and a further 845 homes near to Littleborough Rail Station. Unfortunately, this isn't exaggeration nor is it conjecture and there really is that level of disregard for creating urban sprawl and the impact on your local environment. Cllr. John Blundell, author of 'Sorry, but it's time to build on the greenbelt' refuses to commit to protecting Greenbelt land from development, but not only that, there are no signs his plan will conform with Central Government's policy of 'brownfield first'.

The LCT posted on our Facebook page, a copy of our letter/email to the local MP Tony Lloyd; local councillors, and every member of Rochdale Council's Planning Committee, pointing out all of the above.

Since then we have been berated by local councillors for doing so, who suggest our actions could have rendered certain planning committee members debarred from making decisions. Does this then suggest that the planning committee are 'unapproachable' or beyond reach'? If so, what is the point of any citizen being allowed a legal right to attend planning committee meetings and, when necessary place an objection?

To give a more visible representation of these developments and to break down where they are anticipated we are providing this table for your reference:

Akzo Nobel	174	Land at Durn	53
New Street	110	Hare Hill Road	20
Sladen Mill	41	Land at Ealees	34
Rakewood Mill	26	Branch Road	1
Proofings	35	Dearnley Old Hall	14
Brown Street	37	Hornesfeld Nursing Home	6
Howarth Street	20	Smithy Bridge Business Ctr.	6
GMSF- Hollingworth Lake	300	GMSF-Roch Valley	210
Rochdale Rail Corridor Strategy	1845*		

*Rail Corridor Strategy, there has been no confirmation from Cllr Blundell that the quantity of houses within this plan will be reduced if subsequent plans are given permission, some of proposed areas within the RRCS lie within other proposals such as the Akzo site and the GMSF. Upon asking the question in public forum the notion was rejected and Cllr Blundell stated that he would not prioritise the protection of greenbelt in this plan.

The total number of proposed houses within the villages is **2934**.

National statistics suggest that the number of cars per home averages at **1.2****A resultant 3521 cars**

National statistics also suggest that the number of children per home averages at **1.9****A resultant 5574 children.**

Unfortunately, there is a level of ambiguity around specific dates for the GMSF consultation and when the public will have their opportunity to make comment on this plan. A recent leak by the Manchester Evening News showed little positive development in the plans from last year's consultation and no significant changes were made for the area, though reductions were seen at Roch Valley, [Smithy Bridge road site] (to a tune of 10 houses). The LCT and the Greenbelt group will be working closely with one another to keep all informed as best we can. So please consider joining/following the pages for the latest updates moving forward.

If we leave you now to digest those numbers and consider that this is not fantasy or a pipe dream, but in fact a very real and present reality we are faced with as a community. We implore you to engage and reach out to LCT on ways you can support or work with us to secure a brighter future for Littleborough and Smithybridge.

www.littleboroughcivictrust.co.uk

LCT Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community-Service/Littleborough-Civic-Trust-404277663681468/>

Greenbelt group FB page: <https://en-gb.facebook.com/groups/341662970016941/>

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