



Thursday, 22nd October 2015

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

SWAN was formed in 1998 to defend the first major planning application on Lee Hall, which was fought off at a Public Enquiry. Over the years the group has continued to meet and involve itself in planning matters that concern Westhoughton, hoping to influence policy and highlight planning issues affecting Westhoughton. We do believe that there will always be a need for development, but it must be sustainable, manageable and in line with planning policy. We will defend three key areas of Protected Open Land at Lee Hall, Bowlands Hey and Ditchers Farm, which border Westhoughton as they provide vital green space, stop urban sprawl and maintain Westhoughton's independence as a town.

There are many reasons to object to this development at Lee Hall – housing need, traffic congestion (Platt Lane and Chequerbent Roundabout are already accident blackspots), strains on public transport, inadequacy of infrastructure and services in Westhoughton after years of development without there being sufficient local investment.

SWAN took part in consultations for the Local Development Framework (now the Local Plan) where it was acknowledged in the Planning Inspector Richard Hollox's December 2010 report that:

"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." [Ref: Issue 7, item 62]

In September 2014, following a review to consider planning policy changes, the Bolton Council Local Plan was declared sound by a second Planning Inspector, Kevin Ward, before its adoption in December.

Sufficient housing has already been allocated – 453 dwellings over the period in Westhoughton – that without any likely windfall, brownfield sites.

To conclude: not only is this proposed development not needed, exacerbating problems within Westhoughton, any incursion into Lee Hall would set a precedent for further development on the rest of Lee Hall – a total of 1700 houses were proposed during the 2014 review – as well as on other key and vital areas of green space and protected open land. As well as completely changing the character of this proud, independent town, Westhoughton would simply not be able to cope with this level of potential development. We urge the Committee to reject this application.