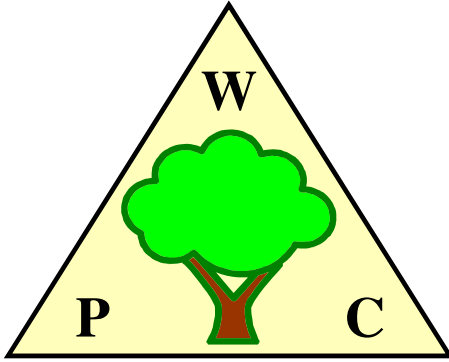


## Woodplumpton Parish Council



Clerk to the Council: Mrs Julie Buttle  
Maple House  
16 Minster Park  
Cottam Hall  
Preston  
PR4 0BY  
Tel:01772 761 637

email: [wparishclerk@gmail.com](mailto:wparishclerk@gmail.com)

20<sup>th</sup> January 2012

Mr Chris Hayward  
Assistant Director  
City Planning Officer  
Lancastria House  
77 – 79 Lancaster Road  
Preston  
PR1 2RH

Dear Mr Hayward

### Haydock Grange Decision

Woodplumpton Parish Council has considered the Haydock Grange decision and as Clerk to the Council, I have been instructed to write to you to request an explanation on the following points which have been raised by the Parish Council, by Parish Councillors / residents attending the Planning Committee and by those attending the Parish Council Meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> January.

1. The draft Heads of Terms (S106 agreement) and LCC Highway comments were not written until the 20<sup>th</sup> December, yet the item was included on the Planning Agenda for decision on the 9<sup>th</sup> January – just 7 working days later, allowing for the Christmas holiday period. In the interests of openness and transparency, the Parish Council requested that the application be deferred to allow residents and the Parish Council an opportunity to consider the submitted information in more detail.  
**Please advise why this request was declined and whether it is normal practice for a S106 report involving nearly £3 million to be considered in just 7 days?**
2. At the Planning Committee you advised Planning Members that Taylor Wimpey would appeal based on non-determination if the application was deferred. The Planning Agenda is dated the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December – yet the highway information was not written until the 20<sup>th</sup> December, which implies that the City Council received the information, **assessed it** and managed to add it to the Committee Agenda in just 3 days! Also, given that the Highway Agency had directed that a decision be delayed until the 15<sup>th</sup> December – **please confirm when Taylor Wimpey made these intentions clear?**

3. A Member of the Committee stated *it felt like they were making a decision with a gun placed to their heads*. Given that planning decisions should be based on material facts, **please could you explain why you considered non-determination to be a material factor of the application?** A concern has been expressed that the decision was 'rushed through' to avoid the financial costs of an appeal. This is substantiated further by point 4 below.
4. Several Members of the Planning Committee requested further information regarding the impact of the development on the road network and it was suggested that the car journey statistics were incorrect. A specific request was made for Highways to attend and address the Planning Committee. This request was acknowledged as a reasonable request to be considered – yet Members were permitted to press ahead and make a decision. **If Members have stated they require further information - shouldn't they be advised to defer the application as a matter of course?**
5. Page 25 of the report refers to a toucan crossing over the B6241 Lightfoot Lane at a point west of Wychnor to provide a sustainable link to Harris Primary School. During the meeting the Chair of the Planning Committee asked where Wychnor was. Sustainability of the development is a key consideration in determining the application and it is noted that the City Council organises site visits to enable Members to acquaint themselves with a site. (Website Mins of the 3<sup>rd</sup> August). **Please confirm whether Members of the Committee attended a site visit to assess for themselves the rural nature of the area, the lack of amenities and where the proposed traffic measures were to be installed?**
6. Whilst it is acknowledged that the planning officer's report contains a recommendation to the Committee, the report should be an assessment of the planning facts pertaining to the development. Concern has been expressed that the report is not consistent in evaluating how representations were made. **Please clarify why the report refers to how the objection letters were received and whether the report is independently considered by an officer not involved in the application?**
7. The economic situation has changed significantly since Taylor Wimpey carried out marketing needs within the area and submitted the proposal. Tithebarn is no longer going ahead and there have been major job losses announced at LCC, British Aerospace and other local businesses. As these are identified by Taylor Wimpey as considerations for approving the scheme, **please explain why the officer's report does not make reference to the change of circumstances? Also what evidence has been submitted to prove this number of houses are required?**
8. It is understood that planning decisions should not be political. During the discussions, most members of the Planning Committee appeared to support the concerns regarding the development, yet the vote was inconsistent with the discussion and was polarised by political party. **Where a vote is split politically, what reassurance can you offer to the general public to confirm that Members have voted purely on the merits of the application?**

9. When the decision is split 50/50 the Chairman's casting vote is of extreme importance. **Why did the Chairman not sum up the arguments for and against before making the casting vote? This is considered best practice in professional circles when a casting vote is exercised.**
10. The City Council were aware that this was a major application and that there would be a significant number of people attending the Planning Committee, yet extra allowances had not been made and there was some concern that residents would be turned away due to a lack of seating. Those who attended the Committee have expressed their utter disgust at the way some Committee Members conducted themselves. A request was made to turn off mobile phones yet a Committee Member closest to the public was clearly observed using a mobile phone as an email / text facility and another was observed reading a newspaper. **Your comments on the conduct of Members would be appreciated.**

In conclusion, the Parish Council considers that the Planning Committee was pressurised into making a decision on an application where Members had expressed concerns that they were not in full knowledge of the facts. There is also a considerable swell of public opinion supporting the belief that the decision was politically motivated.

The Parish Council also has concerns regarding the conclusions drawn up in relation to the interpretation of planning policy and is in the process of preparing a report to the Secretary of State and other government elected representatives requesting that the decision be investigated.

In view of the urgency in questioning this decision, the Parish Council requests that you respond within the same timescales afforded to the application i.e. within 7 working days.

Yours sincerely

*Julie Buttle*

Mrs Julie Buttle  
Clerk to Woodplumpton Parish Council