

Whaley Bridge Annual Town Meeting

Wednesday, 15th April 2015

High Peak Borough Councillor's Observations 2014/2015

By Councillor John A T Pritchard

High Peak Borough Council (HPBC) Service:

Chairman: Audit & Regulatory Committee

Chairman: Constitution Sub-Committee

Community Select Committee

Chairman: Waste and Recycling Strategy Sub-Committee

Group Leader: Independent Group

HPBC Representative on Whaley Bridge Sports Association Management Committee.

Other Service:

Chairman: Derbyshire Association of Local Councils (DALC) Executive;

DALC representative on the Council of the National Association of Local Councils

Chairman: FEMALC (the Federation of East Midlands Associations of Local Councils comprising the County Associations of Town and Parish Councils in Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Rutland, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire)

High Peak and Hope Valley Community Rail Partnership Management Committee

Local Government Association East Midlands Group of Independent Councillors

Board Member: Peak District Rural Housing Association.

I also attend meetings of:

- British Transport Police: (Manchester SE Sector PACT (Police and Communities Together) group
- Safer Furness Vale & Whaley Bridge Neighbourhood Team
- Ward Walkabouts.

Planning: The proposed replacement Local Plan for High Peak (aka the 'submission' version) was submitted to the Secretary of State on 28th August 2014. The Plan allocates sites for new houses and businesses that are needed up to 2031. An EiP (Examination in Public) (ie a Public Inquiry) was held over a four-week period by an independent Planning Inspector between Tuesday 13th January 2015 and 5th February 2015; his final report is eagerly awaited by all interested parties. (NB The documents in the 'Examination Library' may be viewed online at: http://highpeak-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/high_peak/exam_library).

Following the conclusion of the EiP, the Inspector confirmed on 11th February 2015 in a letter to 'interested participants' (Ref: P11 in the Examination Library) that the documents on which further views are to be sought are:

- the alternative '5 year housing land supply' calculations, incorporating more recent information on house completions and commitments. (Document R30, updated 3rd February 2015)
- the 'housing trajectory' spreadsheet (Document R38, updated 9th February 2015).
- additional information on windfall rates for housing (Documents R42, R43 & R44).

The Council provided a proposed timetable for submitting further views (Document P13, dated 26th March 2015), to which Persimmon Homes has objected (Document P15, dated 7th April 2015).

Planning Application HPK/2014/0119 (also known locally as the 'Gladman' application) was received on 19th March 2014 and validated on 9th April 2014. It sought outline planning permission for 'up to 107 dwellings, site access, highway works, landscaping, public open space and associated works'. At a meeting of High Peak BC Development Control Committee on 4th August 2014, a 37-page Officer Report was considered (Agenda Item 6) and Conditional Approval was agreed. An application, which I consider to be materially different as the applicant had asked that site access and highway works become 'reserved matters' and this material change was not properly publicised, was considered by the Development Control Committee on 11th March 2015, and again Conditional Approval was agreed. Because of the circumstances surrounding this highly complex and highly contentious planning application, it is felt that the Local Planning Authority should have insisted that these matters MUST NOT be reserved matters?

On 10th March 2015, an application was made to the National Planning Casework Unit of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for this Planning Application to be 'called in' for determination by the Secretary of State. This course of action was supported by Whaley Bridge Town Council and other parties. Notification has been received that the Secretary of State has decided not to call in this application and is content that it should be determined by the local planning authority. He has not, though, considered the matter of whether this application is EIA Development for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011.

On 12th March 2015, a Statutory Notice appeared on the Council's website and along Macclesfield Road and Linglongs Road allowing representations to be made during a 35-day period (to 16th April 2015, ie tomorrow) as the issuing of a Decision Notice granting Conditional Approval would be a departure from the 'Development Plan'. Such a Notice could and should have appeared after 4th August 2014, over seven months earlier.

We await developments on the replacement Local Plan and the Gladman application!

Strategic Alliance: The Strategic Alliance between High Peak Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council continues to achieve planned savings in service delivery. For the fifth year running Council Tax (attributable to High Peak BC) has not increased.

Memorial Park: The revitalisation of the the park has been completed. This project has restored the war memorial, improved the entrances, installed a new bridge and play equipment, and maintained woodland and wildlife habitat including new planting. The area around the War Memorial was completed in time (just) for the Service of Rededication in May 2014 led by the local branch of the Royal British Legion and their Chaplain Rev. Margaret Jones. The Friends of Memorial Park has been reformed with old and new 'friends' and a project is underway for a Memorial Park 2016 Calendar.

The refurbished Whaley Bridge Station, with the possibility of improved service frequencies and rolling stock, and good bus services provide car-free entry portals to our town which has inadequate parking capacity for residents - never mind visitors. Residents and visitors are able to enjoy the Memorial Park, the Conservation Area and the Canal Basin area (being enhanced by the local volunteers in the Whaley Bridge Canal group).

The park was created in 1920 to commemorate the loss of 108 men in the First World War. It provides a pleasant link between residential properties and the town's shops and schools.

Toilets: Several persons had been trapped in the Ladies and in the Gents after the doors closed automatically at a pre-set time; this became necessary to cut down on anti-social behaviour and damage. Now, a notice on the wall of each toilet explains where the 'door release' button is located. (The Toilet for Disabled Persons is not affected, as access to this Toilet is gained by registered persons having their own 'Radar' key, named after the Royal Association of Disability and Rehabilitation, now part of Disability Rights UK, from whom details about Radar keys may be obtained.)

Councillors' Initiative Fund: Grants awarded to:

- Whaley Bridge Community Trust (Youth Project at Footsteps)
- Furness Vale Community Centre (Community Shop and Post Office project).

Buxton Crescent Hotel and Thermal Spa Project: The redevelopment of The Crescent (a Grade 1 Listed Building) and the Natural Baths and Pump Room (a Grade 2 Listed Building) will deliver:

- a 79-bedroom, 5-star hotel incorporating the Natural Baths
- a new visitor interpretation centre
- a state-of-the-art thermal, natural mineral water spa
- six specialist shops.
- an interactive visitor centre, tearoom and heritage experience in the Pump Room - open to the public free of charge - as well as enabling public access and interpretation of the Assembly Rooms.

In November 2014, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) agreed to contribute an extra £11.3M, in addition to the £12.5M it had awarded in 2006.

In January 2015, it was announced that the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership had agreed to provide £2M for the project as part of an investment package to boost economic growth across Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

This is the final piece of the £46M funding package and the future of High Peak's long-awaited Crescent development now looks secure. The project will bring the building, built by the fifth Duke of Devonshire, back into public use for the first time since 1992.