

Introduction

Presentation by John Crowther and Helen Thomas

Helen and I would like to thank the Town Council for allowing us to address this Council Meeting.

We must start by emphasizing that we are here not just on behalf of the residents Bryn yr Eglwys and Bryn Road who will be directly impacted, but also on behalf of the wider Lampeter community.

This is not a 'local issue' but one with massive implications for the future of the town.

According to the LDP (adopted 2013...to 2022), the School site forms part of Zone H0105 (which inc Drill Hall area (which is currently for sale)).

We have no major issues with the LDP, which:

- Schedules the area for **general housing and affordable housing**
- Recognises the importance of the **red-brick building along Bryn Road (Old School Building)** and states that this should be **converted** to flats

What we do object to most strongly is that this proposed development is totally at odds with the LDP

Pre-Application Consultation notices (arrived November)

We were shocked and dismayed by these proposals:

- **3x the density of housing development** (21 in total, rather than 8 or so in the LDP)
- **Demolition of the magnificent red-brick building along Bryn Road and its replacement with 12 one-bedroom flats.**

I (John Crowther) thought that my wife (Wendy) and I may be alone in wishing to object, but speaking with neighbours and people in town, it quickly became apparent that so many in this community were strongly opposed to the development, for a whole host of reasons – and people from more than 70 residences along Bryn Rd and Bryn yr Eglwys were signatories to a letter that sent to the developer.

No changes were made as a result of this letter.

The document that Helen, Diana (Moore) and I have circulated is simply an extension/elaboration of the points we raised in the letter.

Final Planning Application (delivered 23 Dec)

... with no prospect of being able to contact CCC until the New Year, and no concession made to that fact in the time we had been given to respond.

At the same time, a yellow planning notice (singular) was posted on the top school gate on Bryn yr Eglwys, at some distance from the pavement. None was posted along Bryn Road, by the Old School building.

If it hadn't been for our small campaign group, then virtually no one would have been any the wiser, and the proposal may well have simply been rubber stamped.

As it is, this is now front page news locally, has been featured on TV News, and is accessible world-wide – **we make no apologies for that, because we feel so very strongly that this development should not be allowed to proceed in its present form.**

7 key objections

These are detailed in the document that we've circulated

Key issues/questions

1. Is development of this magnitude/intensity justified? (Is there a local demand?)
2. Is the local impact (in immediate vicinity of the site) acceptable?
3. Can public services cope with the impact it will have?
4. Is demolition of the Old School Building a sacrifice that can be justified?
5. Do we have confidence in Tai W&W running the social housing programme?

1. Is development of this magnitude and intensity justified? (Is there a local demand?)

The proposal is to construct 21 dwellings (is 3x LDP).

We would see the question of the **level of local demand as being critical**. e.g. If there was a clear local demand for 12 affordable one-bedroom flats, then we would support the construction of these.

However, evidence at present would suggest that this is not the case:

- There are many multiple-occupancy properties in Lampeter that at present are not fully occupied (some are completely empty), or have flats that are occupied by non-local people, some of whom have literally been transferred here, some from outside Wales.

These empty and partially occupied properties are **already altering the character of the town**.

Unless this is what the Town is seeking to encourage, then there would seem to be little justification at present for this number of properties.

2. Is the local impact (in immediate vicinity of the site) acceptable?

(a) TRAFFIC:

The most immediate impact relates to the estimated additional 34 vehicles that will park on the site.

Those of us who regularly drive around Bryn yr Eglwys are all too familiar with the problem of traffic congestion, resulting from a combination of the **sheer volume of vehicles** (many from Llanwnnen taking the short cut to the War Memorial), and **on-street parking**, which effectively reduces much of the road to a single lane.

(b) INCREASED FLOOD RISK:

Drainage along Bryn Road is already a concern, and as many of us will recall, there have been occasions over recent years when flooding has occurred at the bottom of Cambrian Road.

On these occasions, runoff along Bryn Road has contributed to this (as reflected in the NRW flood risk map).

3. Can public services cope with the impact it will have?

Were all 21 properties to be occupied by people already living within the local Lampeter catchment area, then clearly the development would have little impact on public services.

In reality, some, perhaps many, of these properties will be occupied by people from outside – some who have come here to take up employment and others who have been transferred here from elsewhere, and may in turn have special needs.

Public services are already stretched to the limit:

- Medical services (Doctors, 2 NHS hospitals, ambulance service, NHS dentists)
- School provision (our new Mega School is already at capacity)
- Social services....

With the major new housing development already underway at Brongest, Llanfair Road, one does wonder what impact a further 21 homes will have.

4. Is demolition of the Old School Building a sacrifice that can be justified?

The Old School building is not only a magnificent building, but it is a fundamental component of what makes Lampeter, Lampeter. Just as important, in its own way as Pont Steffan, the College, the Black Lion, and Town Hall.

Over the years since it opened in 1903, generations of local children have passed through its doors, and many, such as Eirwyn Davies (who was featured on last's night S4C news programme) attended this School, and still has strong associations with it.

More recently, our two children also both attended, and they certainly do not wish to see it demolished.

Its history is beautifully illustrated in this publication and its significance is clearly recognised in LDP (2007-22), which clearly states that ***“redevelopment should include conversion of the original red brick schoolhouse”***.

How is it possible therefore that we are even having to object to the demolition of the building which is identified as being of special significance in the LDP?

Pre-application meeting of CCC and Developers (16/1/16)

The concessions that the Developers claim to have been granted underpins the entire application. It concerns us that:

1. There appear to be no minutes of this meeting. Whilst we have been led to understand that there is no requirement for such meetings to be fully documented, we do not understand how a meeting concerning a development that may well involve £10s millions of investment by the Developer and via (publically-funded) Social Housing Grants could be held without minutes being taken.

As things stand, therefore, we are only presented with the applicant's account of the advice given at that meeting.

2. Status of LDP? We do not understand how CCC could give so much ground, not only on the Old School Building, but also the density of the proposed development, on a development of this magnitude in Lampeter without any consultation with Lampeter Town Council.

3. CCC's apparent willingness to 'commit to' a single Developer two years before the property would to be back on the market. Again, Lampeter Town Council may have had views on this at the time.

What justification is there for sacrificing the Old School?

In light of the evidence we've already cited, is there really any justification for sacrificing this precious building?

Interestingly, **the remainder of Zone H0105 is now for sale**. This therefore removes the need for the excessively high density of development in the present Planning Application.

It would seem logical (in light of these changed circumstances) **to reject this application completely** in order to allow:

- an integrated and sensitive development of the whole site (in line with the LDP)
- retaining the Old School Building as a key feature.
- How fitting it would be for the estate to be named Ysgol Ffynnonbedr.

5. Do we have confidence in Wales & West (W&W) as administrators of the social housing programme?

Helen Thomas spoke on this:

Tai Wales and West Housing continue to show a failure to manage existing tenants of properties they currently own in Lampeter. In recent months we have seen a substantial increase of visits by police, arrests made, overdoses and threatening behaviour and an increased level of antisocial behaviour.

Do we want to see Lampeter become a “sink town” for criminals as has happened in other areas? For the tenants living in these conditions and adjoining flats it must be horrible. It only takes a few doesn't it to spoil things!

Bringing an even larger development to be managed by W&W would in my opinion only add to these problems.

Residents of Lampeter area have stated clearly that they do not have confidence in Wales and West Housing and do not want to see them being responsible for any further Housing in this area.

Key issues/questions

At the end, members of the public in attendance (about 25) were asked to raise their hands if they felt:

1. Development of this magnitude/intensity justified (There is demonstrable local demand) **Response = 0**
2. The local impacts (traffic/possible increased flood risk) are acceptable **Response = 0**
3. Public services will be able to cope with the impact it will have **Response = 0**
4. Demolition of the Old School Building is a sacrifice that can be justified **Response = 0**
5. Confident in Tai W&W's ability to run the social housing programme **Response = 0**
6. If they support the all of our 7 objections **Response = Unanimous**

There could not be a clearer demonstration of the strength of opposition to this proposed development.