

Stocks Residents' Association Press Release 08-11-2020

Green Belt Plans and Brownfield Commitments may thwart Peel's further attempt on Horwich golf course

Recent progress on the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework [GMSF] in which Bolton Council has committed to make the land at Horwich Golf Club and its surroundings Green Belt, and commitments by the Council to use brownfield site for housing are thought to be good news by those hoping to protect the area from over-development.

Bolton Council will shortly decide an application to build homes on Horwich Golf Course as the consultation period on the application has now come to an end. If the Council were to accept this application, there really would be a 'flood of homes coming to Horwich', says Malcolm Harrison, chair of the Stocks Residents' Association. The SRA is hopeful that the recent GMSF progress and commitments to support brownfield development will stop the use of green spaces for development in the area.

The SRA hopes the Planning Committee bears in mind that the Horwich Locoworks plan already promises to deliver 1700 homes for Horwich, which would bring to Horwich a population the size of Blackrod.

The Planning Committee is also urged to consider the best available housing need study for Horwich, which AECOM's Housing Needs Assessment provides [AECOM, 2020] and which was undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan. This highly detailed and professionally produced study by a leading consultancy identifies a housing need figure ['HNF'] that will reach either 19-27 dwellings per year (347-491 in total) over the plan period to 2036.

While objections are flowing in to Bolton Council and Horwich Town Council has voted for refusal, the SRA feels that with COVID-19, many people have been disadvantaged in hearing about the application and in making objections. Many vulnerable who are shielding simply cannot get out and register their objections.

The SRA remains concerned that the Planning Department has still not recommended that this application be considered by the full Planning Committee. "It would be a sad day for democracy if this was allowed to happen. It would prevent our councillors from debating the issues and remove public participation. High profile cases like this should not be allowed to be rubber stamped behind closed doors."

He continued, "It's extremely likely that if the Council allows the development to build 150 homes, Peel will then push ahead with its appeal on the larger scheme rejected in January, and will use any approval of a smaller scheme to justify a larger one."

The Stocks Residents Association, supported by hundreds of residents, will once again oppose development on this protected open land.

The SRA objection can be viewed on the SRA web site: <https://www.stocksresidentsassociation.com>