

CLOUD : REPORT TO THE 2021 AGM ON ACTIVITIES OVER THE LAST YEAR

1. Local Plan Review - Climate Emergency Declaration

In November 2020 the City Council announced a public consultation on their proposals to review the Local Plan for compliance with their Climate Emergency Declaration. CLOUD welcomed the review in principle, but pointed out that its scope was too narrow and failed to address key issues such as sustainable transport, flooding and protecting the natural environment. We also commented that the Peoples' Jury, set up by the Council to address the Climate Emergency, had done a much more thorough job of addressing the key issues. However, as with previous Council consultations, we received no response to the comments we submitted.

2. Transforming Lancaster's Travel

Also in November 2020, Lancashire County Council opened a public consultation entitled Transforming Lancaster's Travel. CLOUD responded by criticising the County Council's plans for concentrating exclusively on road schemes without any provision for the much heralded bus rapid transit system or the cycle superhighway - both of which remain vague aspirations. We also objected strongly to the target of 9185 new houses for south Lancaster and the lack of any convincing justification for the massive jump from the 3500 houses proposed in the Local Plan. Subsequent Newsletters from County did little if anything to address these objections.

3. Master-planning by JTP consultants for Bailrigg Garden Village

In January 2021 we were surprised to learn that the City Council was embarking on a 'master-planning' process for the garden village and that JTP Consultants were leading on this. CLOUD registered our long-standing concerns on Climate Emergency, the number of houses now proposed, flooding, the lack of identified funding for schools and health services etc. In February JTP presented their 'vision' for the garden village. Local residents responded by starting a petition objecting to the very limited time allowed for residents to register their views and demanding a proper consultation process instead. With 718 signatures, the petition secured the right to be presented to a meeting of the full City Council. The address in April 2021 pointed out that consultation with local residents had been handled better at other garden villages, with more time being allowed for genuine local engagement. For once the Council listened and responded by voting for a resolution requiring council officers to provide proper feedback and explanations to local residents. So far sadly this resolution seems to have produced little real benefit.

4. M6 link road to BGV - City Council vote to accept government funding.

In June 2021 we saw the first steps by council officers to secure Council agreement to acceptance of the government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) grant. This grant was a contribution towards the cost of new link roads from the M6 to the garden village. CLOUD registered a wide range of objections, which we amplified over the following months, culminating in a comprehensive briefing note sent to all City Councillors. Our objections covered issues such as the risk of cost overruns on the road construction and the heavy reliance on housing developer financial contributions - despite widespread evidence of developers successfully evading such contributions. We repeated our previous concerns on issues like flooding and health services as noted above. Council briefing sessions were welcome, but the limited time allowed for the Q&A sessions begged more questions than they raised. In August the City Council voted to accept the HIF funding

5. Conclusion - What Next?

That completes the report on CLOUD's activities over the last year. As to What Next? - that is for this AGM and the new Management Committee to decide later in the meeting.