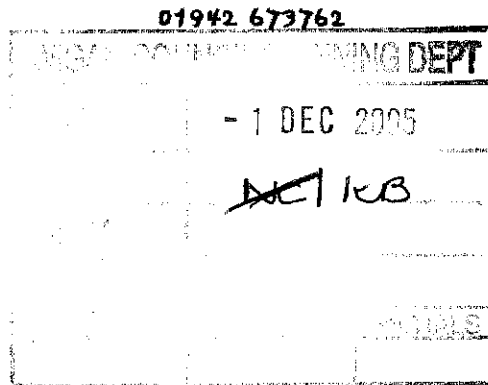


5/29/

Peter Sargeant, 37 Kenyon Lane, Kenyon, Lowton, Warrington, WA3 1LG



30th November, 2005

Miss Kate Brewer,
Planning Department,
Civic Buildings,
New Market Street,
Wigan, WN1 1RP

Dear Miss Brewer,

LDF12 - response to Submission Draft SCI

Thank you for sending me the bundle of submission documents, which has proved very helpful. However, you may wish to note that, because a standard quality envelope was used, everything got somewhat brutalised in transit. The title on the cover also got me off on the wrong foot when starting this letter!

I assume that you circulated the three support documents to other parties, as well.

The tabulation of representations has proved interesting and a useful guide. I note that a good number of similar points were made by different interests - although the responses show varying degrees of sympathy.

I expected the Cabinet report version of the main document, with 'substantive' amendments highlighted, to focus my attention still further. However, I have found that it does less than full justice to the extent of changes made.

So, as a check, I have trawled through my original representations to see what may be outstanding. In doing so, it became apparent that - back in August - I suffered a misconception about the LPS, which has come out in the wash, and managed to misread one entry in Appendix C, which you have evidently taken in your stride. (As far as I am aware, nobody has sought to contact me.)

I should like to congratulate you on the much improved nature of the document and note that, in some instances, you have heeded my suggestions. Making *Borough Life* an integral part of the LDF process is, in itself, a good step forward. However, I think there is further room for improvement - consequently, I am taking up your invitation to make further representations.

This I have done in Annexe A, which falls into two parts: carry-over issues and new issues.

You will already be aware that there are a number of minor errors in the revised version, some affecting setting out. On this occasion, except where they are incidental to matters of greater moment, I have not recorded them. It is your document, after all!

However, I am somewhat surprised at the number of points arising from the previous round of consultation, as I sought to set out my comments in ways

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which both dealt with general issues and commented in detail, on a page by page, paragraph by paragraph, basis.

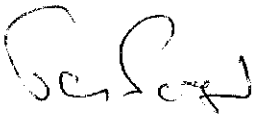
Unfortunately, their neglect underlines my previously expressed concern that the Council is prone to put the onus on members of the public to satisfy themselves that issues raised have not simply been ignored, where they have not been misunderstood. This makes me wonder whether proper justice has been done to other people represented in the schedule. Indeed, some of the responses seem uncomprehending. (Did anybody speak to Mr Finney?)

I should be happy to attend the Examination, even if only a procedural session, but can pursue matters by written representations if the Inspector feels that is more appropriate. Kindly please confirm that, in any event, my original representations are fully at his, or her, disposal.

I note that the Council's form does not provide for requesting information about the publication of the Inspector's report and progress towards the adoption of the SCI (also a problem with the previous form). However, I can confirm that I do wish to be kept informed.

For the avoidance of doubt, this letter and enclosure will be delivered on the afternoon of 1st December.

Yours sincerely,



P.S. Please note that, in supplying reasons for my objections, I have respected the fact that reasons 1-7 are intended to refer to LDF matters, even though some of them - such as 4 - might be cited in support of objections to development control deficiencies.

Please quote the date of this letter and 'LDF12 - Submission Draft SCI' in any reply, for my assistance

Wigan MBC Submission Draft Statement of Community Involvement – objections

(1) Issues outstanding from previous consultation round

My previous representations remain relevant, both in general and in detail (see, for example, previous comments bearing on new 8.8). However, the main issues upon which the Council has not provided any response, or responses that engage with my suggestions and arguments, are as follows:

- ◊ Sections 4-8 and Appendix F Reasons 4, 5, 6 and 9 apply

Little notice has been taken of my plea for statements of basic legal rights. It should be possible to go part way by, for example, making it clear that relevant regulations, setting minimum requirements, can be inspected at Civic Buildings. People need to be given confidence to check for themselves.

In particular, the Council has totally ignored the need for information explaining that representations which it *does not* attach to development control reports can be seen, along with consultation replies and other file papers, in advance of consideration by the Planning Committee. (It may be symptomatic that the Cabinet report on this very matter fails to list the representations, summarised in the schedule, as background papers.)

People deserve to know that they can obtain copies of application documents, including plans, that they can attend meetings (whether or not they wish to speak) and that they can also obtain background papers. These aspects are not even covered in the relevant 'Supporting Document'. With the exception of (free) individual application reports, there is no reference at all to any facility for obtaining copies or the charging régime. (Indeed, the very fact that new Appendix F refers to the availability of LDDs and SPDs has a contrary effect, in that regard.)

I remain strongly of the view that DPDs and SPDs should be supplied free to all participants. A stapled version is sufficient!

- ◊ 4.16 and Section 6 Reasons 4, 5, 6 and 7 apply

Experience shows that the Council's database is being operated in a patchy way. I am receiving occasional direct notifications of what is going on and the odd request for assistance. There is no discernible pattern. Requests for explanations have been met with silence. My possible interest in particular topics is therefore subject to a lottery: if I do not see public notices, I am at risk of losing out altogether. Whilst I note that new 4.16 promises a refinement exercise, everybody should be notified on a consistent basis.

- ◊ Sections 4 and 6 and Appendix G Reasons 3 and 9 apply

It remains difficult to 'dial up' who will be involved when in relation to what, because the Council is reluctant to provide further details. For example, the unlabelled Appendix G, the Ward and Township [m][M]ap – actually 'maps' – is only diagrammatic. The world also ends at the Wigan boundary. So, though Appendix G may look pretty, it is of little immediate assistance to people who do not know which Ward they live in and of even less help to understanding of which bodies might have influence, or be the

subject of consultation, just beyond the Wigan boundary (terra incognita).

- ◊ Section 5, Tables 1 and 2 Reasons 4, 5 and 6 apply

I remain of the view that an insert in the Council Tax mailing is a valuable and appropriate means of reaching the resident population and others with interests in Wigan, at negligible cost. I fail to see how, if the LDF is important, the Council can conclude that such information would not generate a lot of interest. Less direct methods have hardly had a startling effect, if the Community Engagement Database still only has 500 entries!

- ◊ Section 5, Tables 1 and 2 Reason 5 applies

On the other hand, in the absence of clarification of its spread in the community, it still appears to me that it is inappropriate, as well as misleading, to include the so-called Readers Panel in Tables 1 and 2.

- ◊ Section 7 Reason 7 applies

It remains unclear how views will be analysed and weighted and what means will be used to provide proper feedback. Nothing has been added to clarify the Council's intentions, despite the promise (now on page 5) to set out 'a stringent process for reporting back to people and being clear about how and why people's contributions have or have not influenced decisions.' The present experience is worrying in that regard. As often as not, it seems the onus is on respondents to chase for information.

- ◊ Section 8 Reason 9 applies

On the other hand, significant locally-determined rules concerning decision-making are entirely hidden in one or other Supporting Document, such as the (highly questionable) bans on late representations and handing out material (encouraged at St Helens!). For some reason or other, these appear in the one concerning *publicity* rather than the one about the *committee process*, as does the provision regarding the number of outstanding objections which triggers committee consideration.

- ◊ Section 8 Reason 9 applies

It is not altogether surprising, therefore, that cross-boundary matters are not dealt with adequately. The Council has simply failed to grapple with the fact that it ought to influence how publicity is given to 'major' and 'exceptional' developments outside Wigan which will affect Wigan residents and make proper provision for public views to be accommodated in its own consideration of such projects, as neighbouring Local Planning Authority. This is the very kind of thing that one might hope the SCI would deal with, having regard to past experience and known likely future events.

- ◊ Section 8 Reason 9 applies

The Council has moved a halting step towards identifying which newspapers it will use for LDF purposes but not for development control and allied purposes. However, Wigan is a substantial agglomeration of urban and suburban communities spread over a large geographical area, some of

whose characteristics are reflected in new 4.20. Lack of clarity in these matters cannot be excused on the basis that the arrangements are universally the same; it also bears on the uncertainties surrounding developments of cross-boundary significance, previously referred to.

It is paramount that people should know which newspapers will be used to give publicity to major commercial and housing schemes (there being no housing allocations, as such, in the Replacement UDP) and that 'out-of-Wigan' interested parties should know how best to monitor what is going on.

- ◇ Section 8 Reason 9 applies

I am unconvinced that the Council is taking seriously enough the problems that can arise through lack of thought about the setting of deadlines. It is not simply a question of advising: the Council is largely responsible for the problems that do arise. For example, the fact that a developer wants to get a submission in before Easter is not a good reason for failing to take account of Easter closures when undertaking consultations and/or publicity. It may be in the developer's best interests, as he may well understand, to avoid causing confusion by rushing at fences.

- ◇ Section 8 Reason 9 applies

There is still no satisfactory explanation of how applications get to Planning Committee and the rôle of Councillors in that regard (see new 8.23).

- ◇ Objection to Section 8 Reason 9 applies

The contradictions between Supporting Documents remain and, indeed, are made worse by the ambiguity of new 8.27, concerning provision of decision notices – the obvious expedient for *all* purposes.

(2) New issues arising from present consultation round

In addition to any textual matters already noted above and the error at 8.6 (which refers incorrectly to a following page), I have the following concerns:

- ◇ Paragraph 6.9 Reasons 4, 5, 6 and 7 apply

New 6.9 introduces an onerous responsibility, without explaining how ordinary people might be expected to fulfil it.

- ◇ Paragraph 8.2 Reasons 5 and 9 apply

New 5.1 has the mantra 'Inform, Consult, Participate'. However, 8.2 retains 'Inform, Consult, Involve'. Is this right?

- ◇ Paragraph 8.19 Reason 9 applies

New 8.19 appears to be an incomplete recital and misleading regarding statutory periods for press notices (in common with the relevant Supporting Document). Most notably, developments in Conservation Areas and affecting the settings of Listed Buildings are omitted.