

Comments on Applications 2021/1089 & 2021/1090

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Presentation and Transparency

While I completely understand that developments of the size and scale of MU1, and the planning surrounding such a development, is extensive, intensive, and must be as thorough as possible, I have concerns as to the presentation of these plans. Unless I have miscounted, which I have a very high degree of certainty that I haven't, there are two-hundred and forty-seven PDF files constituting just planning application 2021/1090 alone.

The simple reality is that Strata Sterling, and seemingly BMBC, are making this procedure as opaque as possible and removing possible public consultation by using a tactic law firms use – drowning the opposition in paper. This is an argument substantiated by residents from both the Dodworth and Darton West wards that have responded to a survey put out by myself and Cllr Peter Fielding, where over 75% of 142 respondents, at the time of our report, felt that they did not have enough information to make reasoned and informed comments on the plan. You will find a copy of our report attached.

In addition to the issues of transparency, a survey was given out by Strata – supported by BMBC – and these have not been forthcoming until this application. Furthermore, the respondents of this survey and any specific concerns have been relatively shrouded from view, specific concerns are rarely addressed, and the conclusions do not remotely match the reality of their own document.

The Link Road

The issues for this are primarily around the fact that this road will not be in place for the development and as a result will almost inevitably lead actual harm. Such a development as MU1 will require an inordinate amount of machinery and manpower, which results in a dramatic increase in traffic on the surrounding roads. For vehicles to get from Junction 37 to the proposed singular entrance of the site on Barugh Green Road will either require them taking the shorter route, on Higham Common Road, or via Pogmoor and Gawber.

Regardless, the blockage this is going to cause is irrefutable and one major concern, something the residents of Higham Common Road already face, is that the congestion of that road, the speed people travel, the lack of visibility at points and the positioning of a school will inevitably lead to an RTA. Near misses already occur, and this will considerably increase the hazardous nature.

As such, the link road should most certainly be developed first to enable access via both the top and the bottom of the site and avoid the inevitability of an incident occurring. The argument that they (Strata) need to develop earlier parts of the development, profit from it, to develop this link road is absurd.

Rumours are currently circulating that BMBC may fund the remainder of the link road that Strata, for whatever excuse they may use, are not willing to. If this is the situation, I would recommend that this be formed as a loan agreement and not come out of the coffers of the residents, as this is set to be a highly profitable scheme for Strata. One they are already looking to make extra money out of.

Environmental and Ecological Impacts

Continuing the “extra money” claim. Both the Environmental Statement – Non-Technical Summary and Environmental Statement Vol 2 Chapter 10 Appendix 10.4 (A.K.A. Coal Mining Assessment) make a clear indication that Strata will be on a keen lookout for any coal within the ground of this development site and that with all coal found **“the economic value will need to be assessed”** and, furthermore, extraction of this coal will be attempted if agreement with the Coal Authority is gained.

If this is the case, the already estimated astronomical impact of this development – 101,770 tonnes of CO2 emissions (48,034 construction emissions, 53,736 embodied carbon emissions) – will be compounded by the extracting of this coal, the added machinery required for this, the subsequent burning of this coal and for what? To increase the profit margins of the developer of the site at the expense of the environment. Furthermore, the extraction of this coal will bring coal dust on top of the already high amounts of dust that will be raised. The residents of Barnsley are aware of the issues coal dust can cause, and even small amounts can result in damage and lung disease. Dust alone needs practicable measures put in place, without the added concern of coal dust.

I would also be remiss if I didn't mention the simple fact that allowing the extraction and burning of coal, simply to profit the developers, is diametrically opposed to Barnsley's net-zero plan.

As for the impact on wildlife. On the east of the development will be areas wildlife can live, but the inevitable development will remove close to 80% of real-terms green space that wildlife can thrive in. There are claims that the seeming 8-or-so metres of grass alongside the link road are "green corridors" but that is nonsensical at best, and dangerous to both drivers and wildlife at worst. The sad reality is that the developer is either misleading the public with the claims that this project will have a net gain to the environment of Barnsley. The loss of greenspace and the over-a-decade-long development will drive all wildlife away, and the considerably smaller remnants will not hold as much wildlife. No substantiated evidence is also given to support this claim of a net-benefit for wildlife.

This is a site that is already going to cause an extensive carbon footprint, both from the development and embodied carbon, but also the added output of the houses and industries that will be built on this site. Factor into this the loss of green space which absorbs carbon, the significant overall loss of trees and hedgerows, and the impact is significant, and no real measures are being taken to mitigate this, with the plans being comical in the claims that it will be a positive by the end.

Current Residents of Surrounding Areas & Issues of Amenity and loss of quality

One particular concern raised by many residents of the area is that this whole area, despite much of it being left unworked for up to a decade, is going to be lost to them. Strata, in its own documentation, indicates that later housing and development will only be done based on the market at the time. So, putting it into simple language, when it is at the most profitable for Strata, no matter the long-term damage to the environment and lack of access to residents.

If such a delay were to occur, following ground works, parts of this site could be made available to residents with simple safety measures put in place, giving some level of amenity back in return. Sadly, this will not reduce the impact of years upon years of groundwork, the turning of the whole site into a desolate wasteland devoid of greenery, wildlife, and humanity. Land that many residents moved into the location to be able to see and make use of in their twilight years. The size and scope of this development is having a major detrimental impact on the community and the mental health of these people.

Furthermore, one major issue is that Bob Murray has factually misled me, Barnsley council, and the residents of Barnsley. Bob categorically stated to me, in a meeting with Cllr Fielding and Cllr Wright, that the earlier plans of three-story houses backing onto current residential bungalows was a mistake and would be removed before plans were submitted.

In the plans put into submission, there are three-story houses backing onto the properties of current residents that live in bungalows. For examples of such houses, visible on the submitted Phase 1 Residential Development Plan, you can look at Plot 101 (a three-story house, code MY P-412, also known as "opporto"). Further "opporto" houses include plots 97, 98, 102, 119 and 120. In addition, further three-story houses such as plots 112-115 ("Naples" house); 121, 122, 127, 128, 131 & 132

("Rosas" house) back onto current residential bungalows, acting as an imposition and privacy concern to current residents.

The sad reality is that due to a complete lack of buffer zones between MU1 and current areas, there is a large impact on current residents. I have already made it clear in the past that three-story properties do not belong in a position where they back up to current bungalows, but a readjustment of these plans, creating buffer zones with trees, can mitigate issues that would occur even with a two-story property. Removing 5 metres from each side of the link road and creating a buffer zone would be more than sufficient and create a green corridor, where trees and grow and wildlife would not risk harm, as well as act as a visual barrier between residents and the new build.

Trust

My above comments on Bob Murray's mistruths may not be what is expected of a councillor but having been given a promise, I expect it to be met. This is something the residents surrounding this area also expect if they can trust proceedings. With our own survey of residents finding out that many that strata claimed were consulted with never received the letter was an issue. To find that the promised removal of three-story houses overlooking bungalows has not occurred is a further issue.

If a site of this scale is to go ahead, trust needs to be earned by the developers, to avoid issues in the future. As it stands, promises are broken and a lack of care for residents and their welfare is the only thing that is visible.

Further Concerns

- ·Who will oversee maintenance of this land after development? Will this be the council, paid for by millions of £ in predicted rates gained from the development, or will it be an added expense for the residents and business upon MU1? This is not made clear anywhere.
- ·What mitigation is put in place for downstream flooding issues. This land absorbed a lot of water, and with climate change seeing Britain becoming ever wetter, the reduction of greenspace creates issues on this land (with water areas dug for it) and then downstream.
- ·I echo a point made in the past that the business units here are not conducive to high-quality employment. They are mammoth units that only logistics, major storage or retail companies can logically use. Jobs from these are low-paid work, which cannot pay for the seeming cost of the houses that will be on MU1.
- ·What mitigation will be put in place for noise for surrounding residents? Following the plan of 2020/0028 and the omitting of any noise barriers for residents on Higham Common Road next to the southern roundabout, it must be questioned what will be put in place for the surrounding residences during both the earthworks and during development.
- ·Have any discussions with businesses occurred for the employment properties? The last thing Barnsley needs is another huge empty "shed", mimicking the former B&Q site.
- ·What considerations has been given for the roads that this massive increase of traffic will connect to the site on, from both Junction 37 and 38?