

## Chair's report 2023 Tom Wilkinson

Here we are, back in the Cobblers Suite at the Boot & Shoe, where CLOUD held its first meeting 6 years ago. It gives me great pleasure that tonight's chair's report is of a very different nature to the previous 6 following the announcement in June of the postponement of the motorway development scheme on which the development of Bailriigg Garden Village depended.

This decision, whilst not the end of the journey just yet, vindicates all the hard work undertaken by the committee over the 6 years to have the residents of South Lancaster's views be heard and the ridiculous scale and cost of the scheme to be recognised.

I'd like now to take the opportunity to outline some of that hard work that has been undertaken in the last year and convey the thanks that need to be given to Mary and Tony for the huge amount of dogged work that they put in to get CLOUD to this point.

The tone of last years AGM was, on reflection, very down beat. We had lost every single battle to date and that picture did not look like changing as we approached the end of 2022. However, the cracks started to appear at this time with Lancashire County Council presenting plans of the road scheme on which there had been no public consultation, to a resident of Chapel Lane. Tony Breakall's subsequent 'strongly worded' letter to County triggered a chain of events including Mary & Tony's attendance at a cabinet meeting where it was apparent that the cabinet members were as much in the dark about the plans as the residents. CLOUD's role in bringing 28 objections to the table was finally recognised at this time and its contribution to the local democratic process was clear.

March's shambolic and seemingly hastily convened public consultation event at Ellel Village Hall once again posed more questions than it answered. A number of local Parish council meetings that were attended by County Councillors around this time appeared to confirm to us the depth of the division between City and County councils regarding the South Lancaster Action Plan and the 9,000 plus houses proposed as Bailriigg Garden Village.

Subsequent changes in the composition of Lancaster City Council in the May elections where strong supporters of CLOUD won seats, gave us yet more hope that the tide was turning against the scheme.

The decision announced on the 17<sup>th</sup> June that the scheme intrinsic to the development of BGV was formerly suspended was met by the committee with an enormous amount of relief but it is not the end of the road (if you'll pardon the pun) for CLOUD. We have to this point been given very little by way of explanation as to the reasons why this postponement has come about beyond a vague reference to cost escalation. That is something that we will continue to seek answers for on behalf of our members.

We have a number of outstanding Freedom of Information requests regarding the process to date and of course have been lending our experience to the outstanding planning proposals submitted by both Gladman's and Wain Homes.

Whilst none of us can predict the outcome of the Council's next proposed review of the South Lancaster Area Plan in 2025, CLOUD will be continuing to represent the views of local residents through what we hope will be an enhanced level of dialogue at both City and County levels.

I know they won't like this next bit but as I mentioned earlier, I am now going to talk about the enormous contribution that Mary and Tony have made this and every year to CLOUD. Their diligence in pursuing information, challenging the processes, speaking on our behalf at meetings, hosting our committee meetings and generally galvanising our efforts as a committee has been nothing short of remarkable and thoroughly deserves a huge round of applause.....

We have all felt like giving up and surrendering at times to what many have said was the inevitable adoption of the Garden Village, or New Kendal as we have referred to it. Without the support for each other from the committee this may well have happened and I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all members for their hard work and also the contribution of the collaboration with SLICE to present our case. I would also like to particularly thank Tony Blendall for his invaluable support and professional input and to Stephen Constantine who was intrinsic to CLOUD's formation.

And Finally I'd like to thank all CLOUD members who have played their part by submitting objections to the Local Plan and written to their local councillors as part of this process, repeatedly in many cases.

Thank You.