

Statement from Say No To The Cemetery – 30th December

This group was set up for the residents affected by the proposal for the cemetery on Blackburn Road in Oswaldtwistle.

The group is a not for profit community initiative group, and the three main purposes of the group are...

1. **To help residents write a personal objection letter.** For those who don't have access to a computer or prefer penning a handwritten letter, we will offer support.
2. **Fundraising** - We have instructed several planning professionals to have the strongest chance of stopping this application. These professionals come at a premium, and therefore your financial support for this is paramount to be able to cover these costs - the target is £30,000.
3. **A membership group** – Membership is open for people living in Knuzden, West End, Stanhill or Oswaldtwistle.

Supporters of this group can also access and be part of the movement. However, for the sake of legal clarity around our membership criteria and to ensure that we have the best chance of winning our case, we have been advised by our lawyers to limit membership to those directly affected.

(FYI - Members and supporters can join by going to the website www.saynotothecemetery.com).

For those who wish to join and do not have internet access, we ask that you speak to any one of us here, and we will add your names to the list of those who wish to be included in our formal response.

The group has no political affiliation, and local councillors from different parties have expressed their opposition.

We currently have over 300 members, which we hope to grow to 500 within the next month.

At the meeting held at the Conservative Club in October, many of you expressed your vehement opposition to the proposal. Several residents wanted to create a formal rebuttal on behalf of the community by employing the most effective strategy for refusing this application.

Many of you have spent significant amounts of time reviewing the initial application and finding essential elements to refute the proposal's viability. Thank you for all you have done to aid our collective response.

We also wanted to ensure that we furnish Hyndburn's Planning Department with the technical planning reasons why the proposal should not go ahead, presented to have a solid basis for declining the application.

This type of response required the skills of trained, qualified and experienced professionals in such matters.

Having taken legal advice, we understood that the best way to respond was to work with a landscape architect and planning consultant.

This process was not easy, as many professionals had existing work with Euro Garages and could not help us due to a conflict of interest.

We have been exceptionally fortunate to employ three organisations, all of whom come with exceptional experience and specialist skills for dealing with the scale of this type of proposal.

- JMW Solicitors – A London based law firm with a team that specialise in Planning matters.
- Barnes Walker – The North West's Leading Landscape Architecture Practice.
- Phil Rothwell Planning Specialist – A self-employed consultant and former Planning Director of Peel Holdings (a company valued at £6bn with notable projects such as the Trafford Centre).

We are thrilled to have been able to source this calibre of support.

So what are these professionals doing on our behalf?

The lawyers have advised us on several key areas such as...

- forming an entity that is legally recognised
- writing a formal constitution
- questioning legal protocol adherence or lack thereof
- keeping our focus on the most vital points of legal rebuttal based upon case law and legal requirements.
- setting up bank accounts and having transparency over the allocation of funds

One of the residents has paid £3000 to the lawyers for work to commence. It is understood that we have not yet spent this in full, but this may change once there is further work required of them in January 2022.

A landscape architect has trained as an architect and then trains in landscape architecture. This takes around seven years to complete. Many who go into this field desire to protect the land and be sympathetic to it in any development project. The greenbelt is often seen a 'sacred' to them as developers seek an opportunity to capitalise on a return from the land.

Barnes Walker has already completed an assessment of the land, and many of you will have seen the two reports that they have submitted to Hyndburn Council on our behalf.

This has covered the following items...

- Geology & Soils
- Hydrology

- Surfaces
- Burials
- Scale & Earthworks
- Practicalities and Excavating the Site
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A team of four people have been to the site and worked for several weeks to compile the professional rebuttal.

Whilst we have not yet been invoiced for this work, the initial costs are estimated to be around £12,000 for the landscape architects.

They have also done preparatory work to make a formal assessment of the building, and visual impact, which is subject to raising sufficient funds, will give us even more technical planning reasons for this proposal to be rejected. *The associated costs for this are c. £5000.* Therefore, we monitor how fundraising goes over the next week and will keep our members included as to whether we can fund this second element.

A planning consultant would typically work on behalf of their client to ensure the best chance of a proposal being accepted. This person often has local knowledge and legal planning expertise where a project is more significant; there is sometimes a need for local planning inquiry, and both the proposer and those who wish to ask questions would generally be invited to a meeting.

Our planning consultant has been employed with four specific objectives...

- To fully understand the application submitted
- Be the direct link between the group. The architects and the Hyndburn planning officers.
- Advice on all planning matters
- Advice on planning strategy

For those who have read the Barnes Walker submissions, you will notice much technical and industry-specific terminology, which may be difficult to understand to a layperson.

The planning consultant wrote a covering letter to assist the Planning Officers at Hyndburn Council to ensure that all points are raised, are clear and can be questioned as part of their role in making a valued assessment of the proposal.

The planning consultant will also offer advice and support to the Council on any points for clarification based upon the submission from the landscape architects.

Whilst we have not yet been invoiced for this work, the initial costs are estimated to be around £2,500 for the planning consultant.

(Please become a member if you want to view the landscape architects & planning professionals reports).

Additional costs of c. £2000 are to cover the following ...

- Setting up of the Not For Profit
- Domain purchase, Website Design & Management
- Email marketing software
- Marketing materials, including the design and production of flyers, placards and banners.
- Public Relations campaign which will include press releases to both local and national press

Please note that no residents or volunteers have been paid or are due to profit from any work undertaken or due to be undertaken as part of this project.

Many volunteers have given hours of time and expertise to make this happen. For that, we are grateful and humbled by the level of community spirit and the apparent unity of those involved.

We are also grateful to all of the local businesses who have made people aware of this cause by homing collection boxes and leaflets and telling people about the scale of this plan.

Our costs so far are £19,500, with additional expenses added if we decide to continue with the same level of professional support. Therefore the £30,000 target remains realistic.

The GoFundMe page currently has £13,802.

Please note that any monies that are not spent will be offered back to a community-based project.

This would be a nice problem to have.

Our focus should now be on increasing awareness, growing our membership and raising funds for the work undertaken so far.

Many of our members are joining other groups looking to protest peacefully. We believe in your right to protest; however, we have decided that our focus will remain entirely on the planning issues, and we will not be attending any of the protests planned by these groups.

We respectfully ask that anyone who has banners or placards will be asked to not take these to any protests that take place, to distance ourselves from any chance of being misquoted or misrepresented.

Therefore, we ask you as our community to consider the following?

- How do we increase awareness for those who still are not aware of the scale of this proposal?
- Would you be willing to volunteer a few hours to support this cause?
- Do you want us to commit to further expenditure on the landscape architects building rebuttal?

- If so, how much can we as a community commit to funding?
- If your homes were to be devalued between 30-50%, what would that mean for you?
- How much are you able to pledge to help us all achieve this?

We have until the 12th of January to submit any further information.

The next stage is the planning meeting on the 19th of January.

If the planning is approved, we will likely need c. £100,000 to fight the case and take it to judicial review. Are we committed to doing this?

If our Council accepts this proposal, many residents have expressed concern about what adjustments will be made to the council tax if homes are devalued. The property value loss may run into the tens if not hundreds of millions of pounds for those affected. In addition, any lack of income for the Council will undoubtedly impact the services provided to the area if such adjustments are made.

This proposal does not serve our community, and we will fight to ensure that we have done everything we can to stop this with your help and support.

Say No To The Cemetery – The resident's voice of opposition.