

Failsworth & Hollinwood Action Group

Failsworth Pole Conservation Area THE FACTS

You may have received a recent leaflet from the Failsworth Pole Residents' Association, which contained some misleading information about the Failsworth Pole Conservation Area.

While it is true there is a conservation area around the Pole, it does not cover as large an area as the leaflet implies. The following areas are not covered:

- The section of Main Street between Ashton Road West and Florence Street.
- The section of Pole Lane between Ashton Road West and the line of Florence Street.
- The whole of Wright Street.

The leaflet also tries to say that being in a conservation area guarantees that no demolition can take place. Again, this is untrue. Being in a conservation area means that certain changes which could alter the appearance of the area, such as adding stone cladding to a house or demolishing a building, require planning permission from the council. If the council wished to demolish buildings in the conservation area, all that would be necessary would be for them to grant themselves planning permission to do it.

After all, if it were impossible to make any changes in a conservation area, it wouldn't be possible to make any of the proposed changes to the gardens at the Pole.

Housing Market Renewal

You may hear the Council claiming that Housing Market Renewal is not a demolition scheme, in spite of the fact that the Council update on the scheme in July 2005 said that the plan was for 8,600 demolitions in Oldham and Rochdale. As the same report says that there are too many terraced houses, particularly in Oldham, it is safe to say that at least half of these demolitions will be in the borough of Oldham. Approximately 1,300 houses are threatened with demolition in Derker and Werneth/Freehold, which means we can expect at least another 3,000 homes to be demolished in the borough, yet the council has been extremely reluctant to say where these will be. What we do know is:

- The area of Failsworth that lies North of the line formed by Roman Road and Ashton Road West has been declared a third wave Housing Market Renewal Area.
- The area plan for Failsworth and Hollinwood says that there is poor quality housing in North Failsworth and the opportunity for some clearance in the area.
- The Council report which recommended the use of European funding for the changes to the gardens at the Pole said that the changes were part of a programme "aimed at delivering a higher quality, greener, safer environment in some of the most deprived parts of the borough."

Which all combines to give the impression that Failsworth is an exceptionally bad area. As a resident of Failsworth, I know that this isn't the case and I'm concerned that the Council want to portray the area this way.

The work around Failsworth Pole was described by the Council as part of an attempt at "Giving early signals of HMR improvements in neighbourhoods outside the first wave

areas.” and “Implementing a holding strategy to ensure that housing markets do not deteriorate further.”

At Failsworth and Hollinwood Action Group, we are concerned by the Council’s description of the work being done around Failsworth Pole as an attempt to give early signals of HMR activity in the area, when HMR is a scheme which is aiming to demolish at least 3,000 more homes in the borough. We also find the implication that housing markets have already deteriorated in the area to be unwarranted.

Press Coverage

You may have seen page 7 of the Oldham Advertiser of the 27th of October.

There was an article which made use of some of the reports we made the Advertiser aware of, excerpts of which have been quoted in this leaflet.

In their comments in the article, the Council tried to give the impression that they were saying there would be no demolition in Failsworth and Hollinwood, but if you read what their spokesman actually said, the only thing he would commit to was that there was no money in the current two year funding cycle for demolition in the area. If you look at the council’s own report which is quoted in the article, they make it quite clear that they intend to carry out the major work in the second and third wave neighbourhoods from 2006/7 onwards, so the council’s re-assurances are meaningless.

As we have always said, the council is at the planning stage now, not the demolition stage, but it is now that people need to act if they want to safeguard their homes.

Regards

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