



# THE SQUARE CAMPAIGN

20<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2007

# HALE BARNES RESIDENTS RESPONSE

## CITYBRANCH OFFERS A WIGGLE

Many of you have received a letter from Mr. Raymond Gross of CityBranch (Landlord and would be developer of The Square) in which they accused your representatives at HBRR of not wanting to meet and talk with them.

We hope that this article will show that the CityBranch Spin machine is hard at work and that your partnership with HBRR is still the best way to voice your opposition to this development.

In May 2006 Sir Gil Thompson, Mr. Tony Woolf and Rev. Rob Hinton initiated a meeting with Raymond and Adam Gross (Directors of CityBranch) at their offices in the Square. We wanted to know if they would consider putting forward a smaller scheme. Sadly we were told that no reduction in scale, size, number of flats or retail units would be financially possible, in fact they had originally wanted it to be 4 storeys high! It was a long 1½hr meeting to be told of no possible compromise.

**We were told CityBranch had some Wiggle Room**

As you know CityBranch fought a fierce battle but after the rejection at Trafford Town Hall in July 2006 they didn't pause to talk to representatives of HBRR and went to Appeal in September with exactly the same plans making the following statement to the Planning Inspectorate "Notwithstanding the number of objections raised the Appellant will demonstrate ...that there are no

*justifiable grounds not to allow this appeal."*

Again they ignored the objections of the village and ploughed on regardless.

In October 2006 CityBranch instructed the PR firm Bell Pottinger of Macclesfield to ask Rev. Hinton to meet with the PR firm. Its worth noting what Bell Pottinger say on their website about their methods: "*our campaigns have a clear focus on meeting specific and specified goals that influence opinion and behaviour*"

We were told by the PR firm that CityBranch had some "Wiggle Room" to overcome the concerns of the community. We leave it to you to guess whether wiggles to the plans would overcome our concerns!

**no drawings and no new proposals.**

Soon thereafter Mr. Raymond Gross wrote to many of you extolling the virtues of a new Waitrose and announcing, "*Could the store be smaller? The simple answer is no.*"

All things considered we felt the evidence showed that their offer to meet and discuss was a hollow gesture. However, keen to see what was on offer, we asked Citybranch to let us know of the amendments they could make to address HBRR's well documented concerns.

What did come back was a letter with a series of questions including, whether HBRR would be satisfied with a limited reduction in the buildings height should that

be practical but with the same floor space. That very same week, in the trade magazine Property Week Magazine (10 November), Mr. Adam Gross is reported as saying that he is confident they will get the necessary planning permission for The Square.

We wrote again to Bell Pottinger in Macclesfield asking them to let us know of the amendments they could make.

We waited but still nothing came back, except the letter dated December 12th which many of you received from CityBranch stating that HBRR refused to enter into any meaningful dialogue with CityBranch.

On the 8th December this interview appeared in the Metro News "*Citybranch director Adam Gross said he had looked very closely at changing the design but concluded it would "not be financially viable"*

On December 20th Sir Gil, Rev. Rob and Tony wrote to the directors of CityBranch asking once more for details of any compromise to the plans. In his letter of response of January 3rd Mr. Raymond Gross offered no compromise. HBRR wrote once more to Mr Raymond Gross on January 19th to clarify that HBRR's objections to the plans had already been fully documented in previous reports but HBRR

would still be pleased to look at some revised plans.

In summary CityBranch and their PR team are seeking to draw HBRR into a process of 'dialogue' in the run up to the Inquiry whilst offering no revised plans or scale reduction. It could suit CityBranch to show they are in dialogue with the community even though in reality they offer no compromise. HBRR have stated willingness to meet with CityBranch as soon as they have compromise plans to put on the table.

We believe your 800+ letters of objection, your countless emails to Planning Officers and Councillors clearly and copiously state the community's feelings about this scheme. As a village we deserve a centre that is pleasing and appropriate to the needs of the whole community. We deserve a centre that is sympathetic to our context and preserves our community.

**their offer to meet and discuss was a hollow gesture**

The HBRR team is committed to fighting the plans that CityBranch has resubmitted in its Appeal and is passionate about the future for those in our village.

Copies of letters between HBRR and CityBranch can be viewed at the new HBRR Website (see below), or contact us for copies.

## WEBSITE [www.hbrr.co.uk](http://www.hbrr.co.uk)

To keep the community informed HBRR will very shortly have their own website courtesy of Innovative Internet Systems in Altrincham. Please check to see if the site is active by the time you receive this newsletter.

APOLOGY - The last newsletter had the incorrect email address. Please resend any emails to: halesquare@hotmail.co.uk

# PUBLIC INQUIRY TO BE HELD AT BOWDON

Preparations are well under way for the Public Inquiry and already HBRR has achieved a great result for the local community.

At the meeting at the Town Hall in July many of you said that you would continue the fight; we hope that we have made it easier for you to do just that.

As soon as the Inquiry was announced we began working to ensure that the venue was local and accessible so that as many people as possible could attend. We are delighted to announce that the whole proceedings will take place at the Cinamon Club/Bowdon Rooms in Bowdon, with its ample car-parking and close proximity to Hale Barns. We hope that you will show, by

your presence, just how you feel about the planning application. We expect the Public Inquiry to last at least 3 days.

### *Co-Op register as a major objector*

We can also tell you that we are no longer alone in our fight. The Co-Op has registered with the Planning Inspectorate as a Major Objector under rule 6 of the regulations that govern Public Inquiries. This means that they will be fielding a barrister and a team of experts. This is a major boost for the whole community's stand against over development and traffic chaos. We welcome their commitment to Hale Barns.

Trafford MBC have also engaged a Barrister and Planning and Traffic consultants in their fight to stop the submitted plans.

Although Trafford MBC previously recommended the planning application for approval, they now have to oppose the application at the Public Inquiry following the July rejection by the Planning Committee Councillors. Trafford have assured HBRR they that will do their best to reject the developer's appeal and we look forward to seeing them in action.

Our experts have visited the site and are preparing the best case possible on many of the issues we raised last year. There is much for them to do but we believe they are the right people for the job with local knowledge and a commitment to fight.

So put MARCH 27th in your diary, take some time off, reschedule your bridge game, postpone your lunch date and show the Inspector we're serious.

# Funding On t he UP but t ime is shor t

CONGRATULATIONS on a fantastic start to the fundraising.

To date we have £20,000 in the bank and our thanks for donations from across the community. It gives us real heart to press on assembling a team of planning and traffic experts all headed up by a top flight and highly recommended Barrister from Kings Chambers in Manchester.

*Your funding is the village's life line.*

However the cost of the appointed team is more than we have in the kitty and so we are asking those of you who have yet to give to make a pledge or donation to the fighting fund.

Funding can often be the hardest battle of all in any community struggle but if we all give to this cause then the burden is spread.

*To date we have £25000... with some magnificent pledges and donations*

We have done our best to agree ceiling figures with all our professionals and all have shown a real keenness for the fight.

We have reached nearly half of our target and believe that the other half is out there. Letters of objection won the last round in this battle - round two is a battle of resources and that takes money.

Please send in your donations using the tear off slip below. If you would like to speak to Rev. Rob Hinton, Sir Gil

Thompson or Mr. Tony Woolf about your donation then please contact HBRR by post, email or by phoning All Saints Church Office (0161 980

3234). We promise to get back to you.

If at the end of the HBRR campaign there are surplus funds we would plan to reimburse pro-rata all those who gave £250 or more and to donate to local charities any balance of individual donations of less than £250.

Every donation counts. £20 will be appreciated. If you can contribute £100, £500 or even £1000 that would help.

You funding is the village's life line.

(tear here)

## I Pledge my support .

- I would like to confirm my objection to the current proposals for the redevelopment of Hale Barns Square by making the following contribution to the fighting fund:

£\_\_\_\_\_ (please send cheques made payable to: Hale Barns Residents Reponse)

- I would like to register for email updates, my email address is: \_\_\_\_\_
- I represent a community/neighbourhood/religious/sports/interest group: \_\_\_\_\_(Group name)  
We would like some help to make a specific objection at the Inquiry: \_\_\_\_\_(Your name)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Phone No.)

Please return to: HBRR c/o All Saints Church, Hale Road, Hale Barns, Altrincham, Cheshire. WA15 8ST