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News in brief

Demolition is the plan to clear way for school

Homes spared demolition seven years ago could be bulldozed to make way for a school.

When the compulsory purchase and clearance of 200 houses in Whitefield, Nelson, was blocked in 2003, heritage value was cited as the reason. But since then the stone-built Victorian terraces – mostly boarded up and in local authority possession – have largely been left to rot.

Following the defeat, an “enquiry by design” exercise facilitated by the Prince’s Foundation for the Built Environment led to plans to rejuvenate Whitefield by drawing on its historic links to the textile industry and canalside location.

Plans were unveiled to remodel a majority of the old millworkers’ cottages – extending housing choice while preserving the traditional terraced streets – but progress has been slow.

Now officials want to use part of the site to help them solve another local issue – by freeing up some land for a desperately needed new school.

Pendle Council and Lancashire County Council planned to knock down 64 of the properties – a handful of which are still lived in – and use the site for a new combined infant and junior school.

The move has angered housing campaigner Sylvia Wilson, who led opposition to the compulsory purchase orders (CPOs) in public inquiries in 2001 and 2003.

She said: “We defeated the CPOs on heritage value. Now nine years after the original order they are at it again, only this time for a school. There is no reason to knock down any properties as there is another site which is empty that would



Wilson has fought compulsory purchase orders. Photo: Ciara Leeming

fit this school. But the council hasn’t learned anything. I thought the regeneration of this area was about recycling those empty properties and bringing them back into use but apparently not.”

Whitefield Infants and Lomeshaye Juniors share their present site but Whitefield is one of the few areas where child numbers are increasing. The councils say 210 new school

“There is no reason to knock down any properties.”

places are needed – 90 in the infant years and 120 at the junior school.

They deny there are other suitable sites within the school catchment area and say bulldozing is the only workable option. But while the plan has the support of some local residents, it has also brought education bosses into conflict with English Heritage.

Since 2004, 1,000 properties in Whitefield have been inside a conservation zone – meaning

any development proposals must take into account conservation standards. The councils hope they have now addressed the agency’s concerns with a compromise which means 39 homes will be lost and 25 preserved.

Of the 39 for demolition, all are unoccupied. Seven of the 25 retained homes are occupied.

Ged Fitzgerald, chief executive of Lancashire County Council, said: “Following negotiations with English Heritage and Pendle Council over the site for the new school building, I am hopeful we have reached a solution that balances educational, community and heritage interests.

“There is a long way to go but we will now be able to press on with a project that will bring real benefits for the community.”

Council officials say there has been some progress on regenerating the conservation area this year, with two terraces on Every Street restored and work underway on one side of Stanley Street.

CIARA LEEMING

BOLTON HOUSING

Bolton trade unions are organising a public meeting on the future of housing on 12 May after it was announced that the tenants of the town were to be balloted on a potential stock transfer of over 18,000 council houses. Speakers including councillors, council officials, trade unionists and campaigners will debate the pros and cons and discuss social housing in general. The meeting is at the Lancaster Suite, Bolton Town Hall, at 7pm.

PEAK PRIZE PHOTOS

The first Peak Photography Competition has been launched by Buxton Festival and Visit Peak District with the theme of “a breath of fresh air”. It’s open to all and the first prize is a £135 voucher towards a course at Simon Watkinson Photo Training with a four day stay at Rivendale Holiday Park. Deadline is 1 June. For an application form contact Johanna Dollerson on 01298 70395 or johanna@buxtonfestival.co.uk.

HAPPY NAPPIES

As Real Nappy Week kicks off, Ethical Consumer Magazine tells parents to ditch their guilt over using disposable nappies. By aiming to make at least one in four nappy changes a reusable, parents can cut the carbon emissions of nappy use by 10 per cent – in line with the nationwide 10:10 campaign, which calls on supporters to slash carbon emissions by 10 per cent by the end of 2010.

BRADLEY’S MEA CULPA

Liverpool City Council leader Warren Bradley has admitted housing regeneration in the city has “ripped the heart” out of communities” and left them like “war zones”. Interviewed by the Liverpool Echo, he said the council, central government and regeneration agency English Partnerships had been wrong to pursue six Housing Market Renewal areas where stalled plans have now led to dereliction and should have concentrated on one area at a time.