

LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

I am writing to make representations about the Consultation Draft for the Local Plan. I am concerned about the proposals to remove land from the Green Belt and allocate it for housing and particularly about the proposal for land between Shakespeare Crescent and Chesterfield Road in Dronfield.

I was one of the people who opposed a similar proposal at the Public Enquiry about the earlier Local Plan, at which the Inspector supported our objections. It seems to me that the circumstances now are very similar to those obtained at the time of the last Public Enquiry.

The five purposes of the Green Belt set out in Government guidance all apply in this particular area, and I have been unable to find any statement to the contrary in the Council's proposals. This leads me to believe that the land in question should remain in the Green Belt.

Other factors which apply to all the proposed development of the Green Belt in Dronfield are those of infrastructure in the town. Traffic is already heavy and the addition of the vehicles from an extra 850 houses will make matters infinitely worse. Schools would be overcrowded – indeed the Chair of Governors at Dronfield Junior School has stated that the school is already full. Doctors' surgeries, where it is already difficult to get an appointment, would be similarly overwhelmed. The proposed developments are all on the periphery of the town and this would not be sustainable development. An additional consideration is that Dronfield is woefully short of car parking facilities and this existing problem can only be exacerbated by hundreds of additional cars seeking to park in the town.

Again on the subject of sustainable development, I believe that unless substantial new employment opportunities become available in Dronfield the occupants of the proposed new houses will add to the existing large numbers of residents who commute to work in Sheffield, Chesterfield and elsewhere. This would add to the traffic-generated pollution which already exists. The experience of recent decades suggests that there will be no such substantial employment opportunities.

My final point on housing is that, according to the Council, the population of Dronfield has fallen in recent years. It has been claimed that this fall is due to the comparatively high house prices making it an area which is unaffordable to many younger people. It could equally be due to the absence of local employment opportunities driving people out of the area. In either case, a falling population does not suggest a need for new housing on anything like the scale proposed in the consultation papers.

On the subject of the proposed allocation of further land at Callywhite Lane for employment purposes, this appears to be a repeat of a proposal put forward a few years ago. If new industrial use on this area arises there will be an increase in traffic and possibly many HGVs at the congested junction between Green Lane, Callywhite Lane and Chesterfield Road/Sheffield Road. The solution would appear to be to provide another road at the opposite end, linking to Chesterfield Road, but it must be doubtful that the County Council would agree such a road because of the need to build bridges to cross the river and the railway line.

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