

Nature of Response:

Object

Response:

Land Parcels LDF0211, LDF0219, LDF0498 and LDF0799

For the past 2 years our group has been working with the local community and parish councillors to try and achieve the best and most sustainable outcome for our local area with regard to RMBC's LDF proposals.

The aims of the groups are:

To protect greenbelt land and other green spaces from non-essential development

To encourage development of Brownfield sites as a priority

To support development of social and affordable housing for the residents of Rotherham Borough.

Having had several meetings with RMBC planning officers and using local knowledge, we tabled a number of Brownfield and scrubland sites as an alternative to developing in the Greenbelt. RMBC has not taken up any of our suggestions.

Significant development is proposed to the East of Dinnington within the Greenbelt on agricultural land of the magnesian limestone ridge, land that is classified as Grade 2. In the report commissioned by RMBC undertaken by "Jacobs" it is stated that this area has the 'highest soil quality in the borough' of Rotherham and that they had strong reservations against development on these sites, then go on to advise 'Replace eastern sites with "reasonable alternatives" to the north and west to avoid the most adverse visual and landscape effects. Even RMBC's own documentation indicates there are serious concerns in using the land for housing.

The proposals do not conform to government policy, including 'where development in the Greenbelt cannot be avoided then land of the lowest agricultural quality should be used'. There are many sites in the local area on land of lower quality with landowners and major developers willing to progress further but have been blocked by RMBC in favour of using land of the highest quality.

In a written ministerial statement on 1st July 2013 the Government stated:

'As set out in March 2012's national planning policy framework, inappropriate development in the Greenbelt should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Having considered recent planning decisions by councils and the planning inspectorate, it has become apparent that, in some cases, the Greenbelt is not always being given the sufficient protection that was the explicit policy intent of Ministers. The Secretary of State wishes to make clear that, in considering planning applications, although each case will depend on its facts, he considers that the single issue of unmet demand, whether for traveller sites or for conventional housing, is unlikely to outweigh harm to the Greenbelt and other harm to constitute the "very special circumstances" justifying inappropriate development in the Greenbelt'.

The Governments 'National Policy Planning Framework' (NPPF) in paragraph 112 states that 'Local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.'

RMBC have chosen to completely ignore these Government guidelines and have not offered to disclose any "very special circumstances" that would force them to develop Greenbelt land of the highest quality.

Several influential groups, the 'Yorkshire Wildlife Trust' the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and CPRE all class the magnesian limestone as a national asset and priority habitat for conservation which supports plants and wildlife that could not exist elsewhere.

The 'Agricultural Land Classification' system is used by Natural England and others to give advice to planning authorities, developers and the public if development is proposed on agricultural land that is capable of growing crops. The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 (as amended) refers to the best and most versatile land policy in requiring statutory consultations with Natural England.

Both local parish councils at recent meetings voted to reject any proposals to build on Greenbelt land, something that RMBC has dismissed.

We strongly object to any development to the East of Dinnington, land of the highest quality.

Should there be no alternative but to build on Greenbelt, because all possible Brownfield sites and scrubland have been developed, then land of the lowest quality should be used such as LDF 0612 to the West of Dinnington or Laughton Common where building is already under way. These sites should have been the natural choice, with their excellent transport links and connectivity to all the main services.

RMBC have dismissed this site LDF 0612 on the grounds that it is disconnected from the centre of Dinnington but is in fact much closer than some parts of North Anston and even closer than all of South Anston and Todwick. The preferred sites are the same distance from the town centre as site LDF 0612 so the 'disconnectivity' can be dismissed.

Transport:

The position of these sites in relation to the communities of Dinnington and North Anston would see a large increase in the number of vehicles traversing the busiest parts of the two settlements to access the main transport routes of the A57 and M1 junction, giving little consideration to existing residents. These sites are in the worst possible location for good transport links and little consideration has been given to this. We therefore strongly object to the lack of planning regarding transport infrastructure requirements.

Education:

Our group undertook to visit Primary/Junior schools in our area to discuss with the Head Teachers the implications the proposed developments would have on their schools. The survey showed that very few knew anything about the LDF proposals and not one had been contacted by any authority to discuss what impact these proposals would mean to them. When asked about places for new pupils almost every school reported they are running at or very near full capacity.

As there seems to be no clear plans to create spare capacity, we object to the LDF proposals on the failure of RMBC to consider the impact on local schools.

Considering all of the above points RMBC have not listened to the suggestions from our action group, the wishes and feedback from the local people and the views of the local parish councils and lastly the guidance from Government.

The general feeling in the local community is that 'RMBC have treated the public with utter contempt and the consultation has been a complete sham'.

It is our opinion that the LDF proposal for the Dinnington, Anston and Throapham area does not support the best interests of these communities and should be rejected by the appointed inspectorate.