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LDF PUBLICATION DRAFT
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Councillor TOM LEADLEY
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WEST ARDSLEY
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2nd NOVEMBER 2015

Dear Sirs,

LEEDS DRAFT SITE ALLOCATIONS PLAN CONSULTATION 2015: SITE HG5-7: PRIMARY SCHOOL AT HOPE FARM, WAKEFIELD ROAD, ROTHWELL HAIGH.

This proposed allocation for a primary school, between Robin Hood and Rothwell Haigh, is all that remains of two large SHLAA housing bids, 3081A and 3081B, which Development Plan Panel members didn't accept, partly because they were on best and most versatile agricultural land, and partly because development of either of them would have narrowed a strategically important Green Belt gap between Belle Isle, part of Leeds proper beyond the M1 to the west, and Robin Hood and the Wakefield Road part of Rothwell Haigh to the east.

Reduction of the allocations to a small squarish remainder for a school on the Wakefield Road frontage south of Angel Row is welcome; it would keep most of the present Green Belt gap and most of Hope Farm. This part of the farm is marked as DEFRA generalised grade 3 on the soil-quality map, though it looks and crops more like grade 2; there would have to be an assessment of what effect removal of this land would have on the viability of the farm.

There are other possible school sites along or close to Wakefield Road at least equally well-served by buses, for example a part of the large Haighside proposal [HG2-173] south of Wood Lane, or more or less all of the smaller Rothwell Garden Centre site [HG2-174] north of Wood Lane. These are both currently Green Belt and recommended as phase 2 housing sites in the consultation draft; they should remain unallocated until a mid-plan Green Belt review which would have the benefit of firm reports on what progress had been made towards reaching the LDF housing targets.

After considering information provided as part of the overall consultation, I object to the loss of Green Belt at this stage of the Local Plan; taking land out of Green Belt should not be done before the Leeds Local Plan has reached its halfway point on 1st April 2020, after a formal review of its progress. This is to avoid unnecessary loss of Green Belt if the rate of new development, especially the building of dwellings, falls well short of LDF Core Strategy target numbers.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 79 says "the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence"; para 83 says "once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. At that time, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period". Leeds City Council must take this into account; because of the uncertainty and disagreement about targets and numbers, the release of any Green Belt land for development, or to become safeguarded land, shouldn't take place until the mid-Plan review.

.....(Councillor Tom Leadley).

