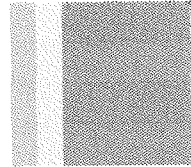


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LDF Publication Draft Consultation
 Forward Planning
 The Leonardo Building
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DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT			
To	Action	Info	File
- 4 NOV 2015			
File Number _____			

Re: The Leeds Site Allocation Plan: HG-1 (3026) New Birks Farm Ings Lane, Guiseley

Dear Planning team,

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the plans you have prepared for future site allocations in Leeds. We disagree with the proposed use of New Birks Farm for housing and we do not consider the Leeds Allocation Plan to be sound in the following areas:

1. The Plan is not justified

- 1.1. This proposed development is on an area of clearly designated Green Belt land yet there has been no comprehensive Green Belt review conducted of the whole of the area, only of this site. The review that has been conducted is misleading. An example is that the Leeds Council review states that this Green Belt does not link up existing communities. The reality is that if housing is allowed on this site the two communities of Menston and Guiseley will have become one. This is surely an example of urban sprawl!
- 1.2. Although the Council has done a range of reviews of the site an ecological review and a transport review are missing. This are the two issues which most concern us when reading these plans. There is a lack of research in the report, if you were reading this report you would not actually see the site that we as local residents see it. This is an area that is currently grazed by cows and has always been an agricultural site. There is a well-used ~~footpath and a range of trees and hedgerows providing a living environment for local~~ wildlife and for local residents who use the path for dog walking and to access the local shops and facilities at White Cross. Green Belt land was designated to this purpose for very important reasons and this land performs an important function by providing "lungs for a



city" once it is built on then this function is gone and our lives will be poorer as a consequence both in terms of physical but also mental health. This site is not just a poorly defined green field, it opens out our views on the edge of our community onto the moors and rural landscape. It is the "foothills" to the Dales.

2. *The Plan is Not Positively Prepared.*

- 2.1. We moved to this area 12 years ago after living in heavily built up urban areas in Bradford and Leeds. Since moving here we have watched in despair as more and more of the area has been built on removing green fields (the Abraham Moons site) and industrial/employment sites (White Cross and Springfield Mills)
- 2.2. During this time there has been no additional facilities provided for the local community. An example is that we were promised additional health care facilities but what we hoped would be an additional GP surgery on Back Lane is now a private skin care clinic. It is very difficult to get an appointment with our local GP and we usually have to travel up to Yeadon for health care.
- 2.3. Transport continues to get worse and the A65 is virtually at a standstill during peak times, which includes many times over the weekend. There has been no encouragement in Guiseley to promote cycling and walking so all local residents use cars to travel even short distances. Instead of seeking ways of tackling this social issue the council are instead adding additional housing and cars into the mix. We can only imagine is that the plan is to ensure that the A65 is totally grid locked and therefore forcing people to consider other options to travel! This is not exactly an example of positive development. Furthermore the site at New Birks Farm leads directly onto Ings Lane. This is effectively a single track road because the lack of parking for local residents means that there is often parking on both sides of this road. Turning right from Ings Lane onto the A65 is already a very tricky maneuver whether by bike or by car and the increase in traffic overall will do nothing to resolve this.
- 2.4. The availability of the train station is often provided as a reason why Guiseley is a good location for further development. The reality will be that residents wanting to travel to Leeds using the train will (based on current residents' behavior) want to drive to the station at either Guiseley or Menston and will therefore demand further land is taken up with car parking. These residents will then try to squeeze onto trains which are already full at peak hours and which are now expected to pick up further passengers after Guiseley at the new station nearer to Leeds. There is nothing in the plans about the plans to increase capacity on the trains and indeed we all know that substantial investment would be needed to do this due to the stretch of single line track between Guiseley and Leeds.
- 2.5. Bike use in Guiseley is limited and suggestions to residents about using bikes more for shorter journeys in the area are always reacted to very negatively because people do not

feel safe using the local roads due to the volume of traffic. The pavements are narrow, along the A65 and so not appropriate for shared use and there are only limited bike lanes. This is not an area where parents want to encourage their children to cycle to school or sports facilities and the plans for the additional building makes no positive suggestions about how we are going to address this as a community. What could be an opportunity to make a greenway in the area using the area of the lngs is not even considered in these plans. The way that transport issues has been ignored is a real example of why we do not consider these plans to have been positively prepared, with consideration of how the plans will improve the lives of the residents in the area.

- 2.6. The new housing in Guiseley has tended towards larger houses, with multiple bedrooms and bathrooms. There has been no housing survey conducted by Leeds Council so we assume that yet more large houses will be built on this space (as has happened on the Moons Field site) No attempt has been made to review existing housing to assess if we have the right mix or to explore the potential of using more “over shop” spaces to provide lower cost properties for smaller households. The population of Guiseley includes many older residents who may welcome moving into smaller, more appropriate housing if they were given positive support and incentives. This could offer the potential of subdividing some of the current housing to make better use of the housing that we have already. This survey of actual housing use applies across the city. For a long time many of us have been skeptical about all the city centre accommodation and how much of it is actually occupied and how much of it is “second home” or “investment” property.

3. *The Plan is Not Effective*

- 3.1. The plan does not approach housing development in a holistic manner. There is no consideration of the plans in areas such as Menston, Burley, Apperley Bridge which are being planned by Bradford Council and which will all impact on the A65 and the train capacity.

4. *Birks Farm and the Green Belt*

- 4.1 The Green Belt exists to prevent urban sprawl, building on this site will create urban sprawl by linking two communities.

- 4.2 This particular site acts as a valuable resource for the community in the way that it can absorb surplus water and as such it is frequently flooded (the bottom end of the footpath on the site can often only be navigated in waterproof boots). The name lngs gives a historical clue to the nature of this site! Mire Beck not only is prone to flooding but there have been instances of



sewage pollution due to the poor state of our local infrastructure. Yorkshire Water have acknowledged that our sewer network is struggling to cope.

5. Community Involvement

- 5.1. Leeds City Council have been very poor communicators about these proposed developments. We heard that many of the planning team were surprised how many of us turned up to view the plans at the Church in Guiseley. This only happened because our local community groups, ANDF and MAGGPG sent leaflets round our houses and put lots of information on social media. Without this local information we would not have known about the proposed plans which are on our doorstep! Even at this drop in event the information was presented in a confusing manner and was difficult to navigate. Many of us gave up on the on line questionnaire which was totally baffling in its use and it is only with the support of our local action groups that we have been encouraged to use other formats to record our responses.
- 5.2. What we found disturbing was that the documents refer to the sites as Greenfield sites which is misleading as 90% of the land proposed for housing in Guiseley currently has Green Belt status. This is an important distinction. When we moved here we looked at the allocation of land and the Green Belt status encouraged us to move here in the belief that we could find in Guiseley the better quality of life that we sought after city living had taken its toll on our physical and mental health. Changing the status of this land is a big thing and it needs much more consideration and a more holistic approach to development. In the past we have been promised that by agreeing to housing developments on sites such as Moons, White Cross, Springfield, High Royds we are in effect help to preserve this green belt land. Now we are being told that our Green Belt is being removed too and the Council has not tried to engage us with this at all.

6. Engagement with Other Authorities

- 6.1. As far as we can tell from the documentation there is only one meeting recorded with Bradford Council about co-operation on development. We find this very surprising that so much could be covered in one meeting. There are no recorded minutes from this meeting so we can only guess at what was discussed. Considering that this bit of land is a boundary with Menston we would have expected a much higher level of consultation to have taken place and a more holistic approach to traffic management, urban development and the local ecology.

How to Make these Proposals Sound

- Leeds City Council must abide by the National Planning Framework and demonstrate to us that it has done so. There are a number of basic errors in these plans which shows us that they have not fully used this planning framework.
- The target for housing seems excessive and there is no reason why such a high proportion of it should be in an area which has already contributed huge numbers of additional dwellings.
- There needs to be an infrastructure plan in place before just agreeing to more housing. We need more doctors and we need more transport planning. Neither seem to be addressed.
- A comprehensive review of the purpose of the Green Belt should be done, what is the impact on the ecology of the area if we remove this land and use it for housing?
- A better understanding of the housing needs of the whole community of Leeds, what kinds of housing are needed and let's explore more innovative ways of creating more dwelling space without building more and more executive type dwellings in this area.

Engagement

We hope with this letter we have shown you that we are committed to engagement in the consultation purposes. Subject to work commitments we would both value being involved in further consultation and discussion with the inspector. As keen cyclists we would be very happy to provide further details about the risks and opportunities for cycling in this area. We would like to be fully informed about the outcome of this plan as this has a big implication for us in our choice about whether to continue living in this community or not.

Yours sincerely

Christine Bell and Adrian Thompson

