

Site 3376 – Land off Weetwood Avenue

Proposed allocation for housing in the Leeds Site

Allocations Plan - Ref HG2-49

DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT			
To	Action	Inc	File
16 NOV 2015			

We object to the proposed allocation of land off Weetwood Avenue for housing in the Leeds Site Allocations Plan. The proposal is not a sound one in terms of consistency with National Planning Policy.

Grounds of objection

1. The site is designated as statutory Green Belt in the current Development Plan. NPPF states that such designation is to be permanent and only changed in exceptional circumstances. There has been no transparent analysis to review Green Belt boundaries in this area of the city to justify the removal of this site from Green Belt. There are no exceptional circumstances to justify a change in the Green Belt status of the site. On this basis, the Plan is inconsistent with NPPF statements, as stated above, and the case for the re-designation of this site for housing development has not been justified in planning terms.
2. The site performs an important Green Belt function. It is an important open space in this area of the city, limiting urban sprawl and protecting an important space in the built up area as part of the Meanwood Valley. The site forms part of a larger network of greenspace in this part of the city which would be damaged by its development for housing. Housing development would have an impact and encroach on Meanwood Park. This space cannot be considered as just an infill site given its strong connection to the open space network.
3. The site is also in a Conservation Area, an Urban Green Corridor and is accepted as having value to wildlife and the ecology of the area. These designations should give the site maximum protection from development and show the importance of the site in the local area and its relationship to a wider open space network.
4. The site makes an important contribution to character of the Weetwood Conservation Area and its development for housing would have harmful impacts on that character. The potential for such harm is stated in the Site Allocations Plan.
5. The site is within the area covered by the Far Headingley, Weetwood and West Park Neighbourhood Design Statement which highlights the importance of open space and the restrictions on future development. The statement is supposed to give the local community protection against such development.
6. During the Local Plan-making process the Council Planning Officers have consistently assessed the site to be inappropriate for housing development. In all assessments the site has been placed in the 'RED' category, meaning that it is considered unsuitable for housing development based on its Green Belt status and the potential for harm to the Conservation Area and green space value.
7. Point 6 above was accepted, until the council received a letter on 9th January 2015 from the site owners, Leeds Rugby Limited, offering to use the proceeds from the development of the site to contribute to the cost of improvements at Headingley Stadium. Then the Council overruled its own Officers professional assessment and decided to consider the re-designation of the site for housing. **However**

- a. The improvements to the stadium are have no connection to the development of the Weetwood site. This is accepted by the Council's own Officers in their report to the Council of 20th May 2015. Thus the offer should have no influence on the Plan-making process regarding such a major decision which involves a change to a statutory Green Belt boundary;
 - b. If the site is designated for housing in the Local Plan this establishes the principle of development, thus any offer to use the proceeds from the site towards the stadium would no longer be necessary as the site would have lost its protection. Therefore in the context of a Local Plan process, the offer is of no relevance . Thus the proposal of removing green belt protection from the site should be rejected.
8. There is no shortage of housing land supply in this part of the city and therefore no need that statutory Green Belt boundaries should be changed in order to address housing shortage in this area of the city. The Council's own analysis of the North Leeds HMCA has confirmed this position.
9. The proposed capacity of the site for housing development, identified as 30 units, means that if it is retained in Green Belt this will have no great impact on in terms of housing land supply in this part of the city.

This proposal is inappropriate in planning terms . The basis for the proposed change in the Green Belt boundary and allocation of the site for housing development is unsound and the proposal should be removed from the Site Allocations Plan. The Plan fails in terms of being consistent with the National Planning Policy and lacks justification. The site should remain in the Green Belt and the proposed housing allocation should be removed from the Plan.

The site would be of amenity value to the local community if it was returned to its previous use as a sports ground. There is a shortage of sports grounds for local use for example for use by local primary schools in the area.

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