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DATE 13 NOVEMBER 2015

PDH01958

Dear Sirs,

SITE ALLOCATIONS PLAN CONSULTATION : SITE HG2-173: HAIGHSIDE, ROTHWELL.

About 22.1 hectares of land at Haighside, Rothwell Haigh, south of Wood Lane and east of Wakefield Road, is recommended for release for house-building in the current Leeds Local Plan site allocations consultation. According to the documents, it would be in phase 2, have an estimated capacity of 578 dwellings, require improvements to the junction of Wood Lane and Wakefield Road, and should await completion of public transport improvements such as the NGT trolleybus, the Stourton depot and park and ride terminus of which would be at the foot of Bell Hill.

Most of this site is "rhubarb triangle" market gardening land, DEFRA grade 2, well-farmed and improved in the traditional way with wool waste or shoddy manure; it is most productive, so its loss should not be looked upon lightly. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 112 requires local planning authorities to take into account the economic and other benefits of best and most versatile agricultural land, that is, DEFRA grades 1, 2 and 3a. Where significant development of agricultural land is shown to be necessary, poorer quality land should be used in preference to that of higher quality. Only 4% of land in England is grade 1, less than 1% in Leeds; grade 2 is the next best quality, so it is unlikely that a proper sequential search of agricultural land across Leeds would justify building on land at Haighside.

A small part of the overall site, just beyond the southern end of the adopted part of Low Shops Lane, was occupied by the Low Shops colliery workshops until they were demolished in the 1960s; their site has become overgrown with trees and shrubs, so it isn't brownfield. Together with some hedgerows, it gives wildlife a habitat in an otherwise open arable landscape. Overhead power lines carried on two sets of pylons cross the western part of the site at an oblique angle with a dog-leg to the north; they would reduce the amount of land fit for housing, resulting in a inefficient use of land. Farmland would be lost which is being cultivated regardless of power lines.

In the north-eastern angle of the Wakefield Road and Wood Lane junction is a building of redbrick and blue slate opened in 1904 as a depot of the Yorkshire (West Riding) Electric Tramways, predecessors of Arriva West Yorkshire; this should be kept as a local heritage asset if the junction layout had to be altered. A pair of whale jawbones set up to form an arch stands opposite; this is the latest in a succession of similar pairs and should be kept if highway alterations are needed.

Haighside is part of a strategic Green Belt gap between Rothwell to the north and east, and the built-up Wakefield Road part of Rothwell Haigh and Robin Hood to the south-west. Allocating this site for development would lessen that gap and encourage coalescence of settlements in a part of West Yorkshire where many Green Belt gaps are narrow already and urban sprawl threatens to destroy the separateness and distinctiveness of communities. This would be contrary to the objectives of the Leeds Local Plan Core Strategy.

Loss of any Green Belt at this stage of the Local Plan is to be opposed strongly and should be avoided; 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 progress. This is to avoid unnecessary loss of Green Belt if new development, especially the need for dwellings, falls well short of LDF Core Strategy targets. According to the consultation document, development at Haighside should await public transport improvements such as the NGT trolleybus. NGT won't be ready until at least 2021, if at all, underlining the case for putting back consideration of this site until an LDF review in 2020 of all Green Belt sites proposed for release; meanwhile it should be pencilled into phase 3 to allow that delayed assessment to take place, or be rejected outright as development land.

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, so I object to the release of land at Haighside for development.

(Signed).....[redacted].....

Also, I wish to add personal comments which are set out below.

The proposals would also have an unacceptable impact on the existing community in terms of any access to the site through the neighbouring estate.

I understand that the landowner of Hope Farm, situated to the west of A61 Wakefield Road, has submitted his land as an alternative to the Haighside site. I would urge the Council to consider this site as being a more appropriate and suitable option to deliver growth in this part of Leeds.

Note: comments can be sent on-line to www.leeds.co.uk/yourcity , or by e-mail to sap@leeds.gov.uk . Comments, whether electronic or on paper, must be received by Leeds not later than 5pm on Monday 16th November 2015. Preferably, comments should quote the reference number and name of the allocation site to which they refer, if it has any, such as HG2-173, Haghside, Rothwell. There is no limit to the number of sites which can be commented on. Please continue overleaf and add more sheets of paper if needed. Anonymous comments cannot be accepted by Leeds, so always give clearly your name and postal or e-mail address.