

Green Belt Working Group

Meeting of 29th January 2016

As of 29.01.2016 the Green Belt Working Group consists of – Dawn Biram, David Crosby, Gillian Farnsworth, Thelma Harvey, Andrew Johnson, Cllr Joe Otten, Christopher Pennell

Present: David Crosby (DC), Thelma Harvey (TH), Andrew Johnson (AJ)

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Gillian Farnsworth and Christopher Pennell (CP) who sent an email with comments to add to the meeting

Appointment of Chair and Secretary

David Crosby (DC) undertook the role of Chair and Thelma Harvey (TH) that of Secretary

Review of Dore Neighbourhood Forum Draft Plan

DC emphasised that our discussions and decisions must be informed by current National and local policies. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out clear rules in regard to Green Belts but their 'exceptions' list is more ambiguous and more open to interpretation. Local policies such as the Sheffield Plan and the Sheffield City Council (SCC) Green Belt Review are where the Dore Neighbourhood Forum (DNF) may have some influence in shaping those policies.

The Vision and Objectives in the DNF Draft Plan relevant to the Green Belt were considered and thought to be still appropriate.

Vision

Dore Neighbourhood benefits from the natural beauty and public access to the Eastern Moorland Fringe of the Peak District National Park

Dore Village retains its separate and unique character enclosed by the Sheffield Green Belt

Objectives

Protect and enhance the Eastern Moorland Fringe of the Peak District National Park

Protect and enhance the Sheffield Green Belt

The National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt Policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open – the essential character of Green Belts is their openness and their permanence.

Green Belts serve five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- to prevent neighbourhood towns merging into one another
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the green belt, such as:

- looking for opportunities to provide access
- providing opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation
- retaining and enhancing landscapes
- visual amenity and biodiversity
- improving damaged and derelict land

Inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt, except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other circumstances.

Construction of new buildings is inappropriate in the Green Belt. The exceptions are:

- buildings for agriculture and forestry
- provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it
- the extension or alteration of a building provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building
- the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces
- limited infilling in villages and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan.

(CP expressed the view that there is potential danger in these exceptions as the quality of the Green Belt is being brought to the fore, with some parts being seen as having greater value than others. This could be seen as a slippery slope where it is necessary to justify one's 'own' Green Belt not for its original constraining purpose but for additional value. CP is of the view that DNF has to pay lip service to this but we should still stand by our Green Belt because it does constrain Sheffield's growth into the countryside and into Dore.)

The Green Belt in Dore Neighbourhood

Dore Village is almost entirely surrounded by the Sheffield Green Belt which is particularly important in the Dore Neighbourhood to check the unrestricted sprawl of Sheffield City,

prevent the neighbouring built-up areas of Dore, Totley and Bradway merging into each other and to assist in safeguarding the attractive countryside from encroachment.

The DNF responded to the Sheffield Plan – Our City, Our Future (Citywide Options for growth to 2034) Consultation in November 2015. The SCC Green Belt Review is part of the Sheffield Plan. Most of the DNF response relating to the Green Belt has been incorporated into the Dore Neighbourhood Plan as proposals for further consideration.

In the Sheffield Plan Consultation document SCC is of the opinion ‘that the majority of Sheffield’s Green Belt is too environmentally sensitive to be suitable for development, and areas bordering the Peak National Park are particularly valuable, and the countryside around Sheffield is one of the city’s distinctive characteristics which make it a great place to live’. DNF heartily endorses this statement.

DNF also made the following proposal in its response to the Consultation ‘to prevent the merging of Dore, Bradway and Totley we propose that Poynton Wood and Clay Wood be designated as Green Belt in the Review’.

DNF in its response to the Consultation also agreed with the Government’s further guidance that “unmet housing need (including for traveller sites) is unlikely to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and other harm to constitute the ‘very special circumstances’ justifying inappropriate development on a site within the Green Belt” in Dore Neighbourhood.

DNF proposals for inclusion in the Dore Neighbourhood Plan

DNF are of the opinion that the Green Belt in Dore Neighbourhood Area is too environmentally sensitive to be suitable for development for the following reasons:

It is in an area bordering the Peak District National Park, which is particularly valuable because it affords views from the Park of visually attractive landscape and a village of low density housing and open spaces, furnished with many mature trees

The landscape is of intrinsic value, the majority is designated of High Landscape Value in the Unitary Development Plan

Ecclesall Woods is an ancient woodland of high ecological value which requires the adjacent countryside, parts of which are designated as Ecological Nature Sites to form a buffer to safeguard its ecological character. Ecclesall Woods is designated an Area of Natural History Interest in the Unitary Development Plan and of High Ecological Value in the Draft sites and Policies Document of the Sheffield Local Plan

The area includes a large number of open spaces that provide important recreational facilities for the local and wider community. Many are demonstrably significant because of their historic and recreational value, tranquillity and richness of wildlife.

The area provides a network of designated public footpaths providing for the enjoyment of the countryside by residents and visitors. Public footpaths provide access to the Peak District National Park access land, Ecclesall Woods and the Green Corridors along the River Limb, Old Hay Brook and the River Sheaf.

(This new bullet point in the Draft DNP is derived from points made by CP in his email) We have a proud heritage to protect in that we are heirs to the nation's original and most dynamic proponents of the Green Belt concept, Ethel and Gerald Haythornthwaite. Ethel founded The Sheffield Association for the protection of Local Scenery in 1924. In 1926 she attended the inaugural meeting of the new Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) and by 1927 she had steered her own Sheffield Association into becoming a branch of CPRE. There have been two centrepieces to the work of that branch over the last 90 years -

- to establish and then protect a Green Belt to contain Sheffield's tendency to sprawl into the countryside
- to designate the Peak District as a National Park and then protect it. These aims were successful providing the UK with its first Green Belt (outside that of around metropolitan London) in 1938 and its first National Park in 1951.

The area also has areas of defined archaeological value identified in the 'South Yorkshire Historic Environment Characterisation, especially at Ryecroft Farm

The Green Belt provides an important component of the character of Dore Village Housing Areas identified by DNF which make Dore 'a great place to live'

Long Line

As part of the Consultation on the Sheffield Plan, DNF responded to a SCC proposal about the development of Long Line. Sheffield green belt is protected by the Sheffield Local Plan Core Strategy CS71. Draft Local Plan Policy G6A provides for exceptions to the general prohibition on development in the Green Belt which includes the 'substantially developed frontage of Long Line' within the Dore Neighbourhood Area. This frontage comprises three groups of dwellings on the south western side of the road only, numbers 1-19, 57-63 and 147-175 Long Line. Opportunities may arise in developing or re-developing sites for inclusion of designs and landscaping that can enhance views from the Peak District National Park Eastern Moorland Fringe

DNF responded 'we strongly support NPP regarding Green Belt land – to check the unrestricted sprawl of Sheffield City. With regard to the National Planning Policy Guidance- DNF is of the opinion that Long Line is not a village and therefore should not be identified for infilling of single house plots as proposed in draft policy G6A

(CP's email reminded us that it is not a new idea to build in this area. In 1933 Ethel Haythornthwaite challenged a proposal to build 900 houses between Whirlow Bridge and Long Line and opposite Dore Moor Inn. She won her challenge and suggested that there should be some limit on where the town should end and the countryside begin. CP exhorts us to be as determined in defence of our Green Belt now as she was then). This issue was discussed further and it was decided that in accordance with SCC advice and the wish of DNF to consult widely, the views of the residents of Long Line should be sought.

ACTION

DC to draft a letter which will be sent to Long Line residents seeking their views on the G6A proposal.

Replies will be collated and sent to the SCC Green Belt Review

Green Belt Enhancement Areas

The character areas listed in the Sheffield Local Plan Policy Guide GB6 are identified in the Sheffield Landscape Character Assessment. These assessments set out the key features that contribute to the character of each area and they will be used, in conjunction with the Peak District National Park Authority as required.

There are two sites in the Sheffield Green Belt around Dore that detract from the amenity and appearance of the Green Belt Landscape Character Area.

Old Whitelow Farm

The first is the caravan storage area at Old Whitelow Farm. This matter has now been resolved as part of a Section 106 agreement requested by the DVS and can be removed from the DNP.

Cross Lane

The second site is a former sports field in Cross Lane adjacent to the Hathersage Road which has not been used for over fifteen years. The site includes a derelict sports pavilion which is particularly detrimental to the visual amenity of this part of the Sheffield Green Belt.

DNF have proposed that a scheme of reclamation will be prepared to return the site to sports use or agriculture.

SCC have advised that as this is more of a proposal than a planning policy DNF should identify this issue as an Annexe to the DNP. They also advise that DNF hold discussions with the landowner to draw out why the land has not been used for so long and other factors which may need to be considered when investigating this proposal.

After some discussion about other possible uses of the land e.g. grazing (AJ) woodland burial ground (TH) it was decided that DC would draft a letter for approval to send to the landowner.

ACTION

DC to draft a letter to the landowner.

Next Meeting

It was agreed not to set a meeting date until there was some response from our action plans.