

Results of Housing Questionnaire Survey For Dore Neighbourhood Plan Steering group

The Dore Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group inserted questionnaires in all copies of the early Spring 2017 Dore to Door issue delivered to every home in Dore Neighbourhood Area. On 6 May 2017 the survey was closed.

319 individuals returned completed questionnaires of which 5 were invalidated as not being supplied by existing Dore residents. There were therefore 314 valid returns.

Question 1: Do you endorse the Council's provisional view as set out in 'Citywide Options for Growth in November 2015':

"The majority of Sheffield's Green Belt is too environmentally sensitive to be suitable for development. Areas bordering the Peak District 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. "?

304 individuals agreed with this provisional view (including ALL those who answered NO to Question 2, ie. those who felt Dore should contribute towards Sheffield's forward housing growth over and above windfall sites)

10 individuals disagreed with this provisional view (all of whom had answered YES to Question 2)

Question 2: Do you believe that Dore should contribute to Sheffield's forward housing growth beyond the occasional windfall site?

28 individuals answered YES to this question.

286 individuals answered NO to this question.

Of the 28 individuals answering YES to Question 2, when asked at Question 3 where they thought Dore's contribution should come from, the following sources were cited:

- 23 individuals accepted the case for greater density of housing in Dore
- 20 were prepared to accept the loss of gardens to new development
- 9 accepted the loss of one or more of Dore's existing green open spaces for new housing
- 4 accepted the principle of releasing Green Belt sites for new housing
- In providing more specific sources under these headings the following were cited: the Dyson site once; the field bordered by Cross Lane and Hathersage Road four times; any spaces not currently productively used four times; some release from the Dore Recreation Ground once; some marginal Green Belt next to existing housing once; building apartments upwards once; more low cost housing twice; modest infill on Limb Lane and Ash House Lane twice; and

Of the 286 individuals answering NO to Question 2, when asked at Question 4 why they thought that Dore should not contribute on any significant scale beyond windfalls, the following reasons were cited

- 275 individuals said that Dore's proximity to the National Park should rule out releases of Green Belt between the village and the Park
- 234 individuals said that Dore currently lacked the infrastructure of sufficient school places and good public transport to cope with significant housing growth
- 193 individuals said that developers tend to ignore the need for starter and affordable homes in Dore in favour of large and elaborate houses which do not meet the needs of Sheffield

- 162 said that Dore's character as a high quality housing area would be damaged at a real loss to Sheffield as a whole
- Amongst the most common additional reasons cited for not wanting to contribute significantly were: risk of increased traffic and parking congestion; lack of adequate services in Dore; need for more diversity of homes; need to avoid the slippery slope towards even more growth once some is conceded; drainage problems; the village is overcrowded at its rural edge; Dore has provided a lot of new houses in recent years; Dore is one of the few remaining villages within Sheffield's main suburban growth; the City already has plenty of potential building land within 3 miles of the city centre.

Question 5: On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is the highest level of benefit, how would you rank EACH of the following alleged benefits of Dore's Green Belt?

314 individuals answered this question scoring from 1 to 5 for EACH benefit, producing the following spread of scores:

- 1440 points (avg. 4.59) for the importance of this Green Belt as especially precious for its role in protecting the setting of the National Park
- 1384 points (avg. 4.41) for the role of the Green Belt in constraining urban sprawl into the countryside
- 1297 points (avg. 4.13) for the role Green Belt plays in forcing planners and developers to focus on redeveloping new housing on existing urban developed areas
- 1218 points (avg. 3.88) for the green corridor which this Green Belt provides for wildlife to and from Ecclesall Woods
- 1165 points (avg. 3.71) for the good recreational opportunities which this Green Belt provides for all Sheffield residents

- 1083 points (avg. 3.45) because the Green Belt is good for tourism and attracting wealth to the City

When comparing the scoring patterns for those 286 who had suggested that Dore should not absorb more housing above windfall numbers and those 28 who had said Dore should absorb more, the figures were relatively similar (although the 286 in the majority tended to give slightly higher scores than the 28 in the minority did), except that the 28 valued the Green Belt's role in focusing attention on brownfield sites marginally higher than its role in constraining urban sprawl , thus, by averages for each group of respondents:

	<u>The 286 majority</u>	<u>The 28 minority</u>
Park setting	4.65	3.96
Constraining urban sprawl	4.48	3.64
Brownfield focus	4.16	3.79
Wildlife corridor	3.92	3.50
Recreational opportunities	3.73	3.71
Tourism and wealth	3.50	3.45

The principal additional alleged benefits of Dore's Green Belt suggested by some respondents were: its function as a provider of fresh air and cleanser of polluted air; the physical and mental health benefits it afforded to those who exercised in it and enjoyed views across it; its role in absorbing rainfall and reducing flood risks; it plays a part in identifying the character of the village in which it is set; it's good for dog-walking too!

Interpretation and Conclusions

This has been an objective and successful questionnaire survey – ‘objective’ in that it gave free rein to respondents to express widely differing views and ‘successful’ in that it was an impressive return rate for this kind of survey. It was valuable too

in that the responses we received tended to confirm the kind of views the Steering Group had heard throughout its various consultation events and methods; but this time we can cite the responses as statistical evidence.

Having gone to so much trouble to test Dore's opinions on the future of housing in Dore and the future of the Green Belt surrounding Dore, we must not shirk from reflecting those opinions in our Neighbourhood Plan: it is now our duty to take account of this survey in our drafting.

Notwithstanding the need for more housing in Sheffield, this survey shows that there is little appetite in Dore to build more houses within the Dore Neighbourhood Area beyond such new housing which might arise from future windfall sites. Less than 10% of our respondents believed that Dore should do more and only 4 of them (that is 4 out of 28) thought that Green Belt releases should provide sites for building houses. This means that the vast majority of Dore residents do not want to see significant increases in the density of buildings in Dore and do not want to see any escalation in garden losses to provide new homes. Dore has grown enormously in the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, but that growth, if continued, is threatening the relationship between Dore and the setting of the Peak District National Park and is in danger of overwhelming the highly valued character of Dore itself.

What is evident from this survey is that it is not just hearsay or opinion that Dore people hugely value their neighbouring Green Belt, nor is correct to assert that this represents predominantly a comfortable selfishness. Our respondents have demonstrated a good natural understanding of the NPPF purposes for the existence of Green Belt, citing two of them in their top three choices of the benefits which Green Belt gives. Not a single respondent chose to claim that the proximity of the Green Belt increased and safeguarded the value of his/her home, but there was huge support for the roles which Green Belt played and

should continue to play in constraining urban sprawl into the countryside and in focusing planning and developer attention on the vital need to redevelop urban brownfield areas before breaking into fresh greenfield areas, particularly when the latter are protected by Green Belt designation.

What was most apparent in this survey (whether respondents supported more house-building beyond windfall sites or not) was that the most strongly cited reason for valuing Dore's Green Belt (as opposed to Green Belt in general) was that it protected the setting of a National Park consisting of landscapes enjoying the highest level of designation for their beauty in the UK. Dore folk value their close relationship with the National Park – and it is by proximity the closest relationship of any of Sheffield's suburbs – and they reject any notion that there is scope for narrowing the gap between Dore and the National Park boundary any more than the current position. In effect, Dore folk are saying this isn't just any Green Belt: this Green Belt is the setting of a National Park and should be respected as such. Indeed, such is the proximity of Dore village to the National Park that, not only should the gap be protected from development, but Dore village as it is needs to be valued, lest its character changes and detracts from the National Park from which it can be seen.

In short, Dore recognises the huge value of any Green Belt in constraining urban sprawl into the countryside, but in this case it should not just *constrain* such sprawl, it should *prevent* it, because the countryside is not any old countryside, but rather it is the valued setting of a National Park.

There was additionally strong support in Dore for the role which our local Green Belt plays in providing a green wildlife corridor between Ecclesall Woods and the wider countryside of the National Park (as is applauded in Government reports on making space for nature).

There is a level of suspicion of developer intentions evident here, in that the vast majority of respondents cite that, even if developers were given Green Belt releases in Dore Neighbourhood Area and/or garden releases, history suggests that they would only build large executive houses instead of the more modest houses which Sheffield so desperately needs. There is also a level of suspicion of City Council planners in that clearly many respondents believe that planning may ignore the belief in Dore that this community lacks the infrastructure in good public transport and adequate school spaces and community and commercial services required for further growth.

It is noteworthy how there was overwhelming support for the City Council's statement of belief in *Citywide Options for Growth* that, not only is the majority of the City's Green Belt too environmentally sensitive to be suitable for development, but also that the areas of Green Belt bordering on the Peak District National Park are particularly valuable. If the Council sticks to this view, it will find strong support in Dore, and also it will be seen to uphold the NPPF view that one of the principal beneficial features of Green Belt is the sense in which it is regarded as relatively permanent.

CHP 8 May 2017

Notes:

1. Where a single name was provided on a returned form, a single 'vote' was recorded.
2. Where two names or a couple's name were openly provided on a form, two 'votes' are recorded with common choices.
3. Where no tick or score has been provided in a box choice, it has been recorded as a nil return.
4. where respondents ticked or crossed all the box choices at Question 5 in stead of ranking each of them, the ticks/crosses have been recorded as nil returns

5. Where respondents have clearly made an error on Question 5 by comparatively ranking the choices from 1 to 5 instead of ranking each choice separately from 1 to 5, the figures given have been accepted without alteration, because they still indicate which of the choices the respondent considered gave the most benefit and which the least and all points between.
6. Where respondents have taken the opportunity to indicate other reasons or choices which might apply they have been recorded with some necessary paraphrasing to keep the respondent's meaning but more succinctly.
7. A few returns from outside the Dore Neighbourhood Area have been discounted from this analysis.

