

Sheffield Plan: Responses to Questions submitted at, or following, the Public Webinar held on 16 September 2020

1. Some of the areas of Sheffield have been given special protection under CS72 eg Hollin Busk near Stocksbridge. One option would be to put such areas in the Green Belt. Another option would be to give it strong local protection. What are the relative merits of each option? There is significant local objection to developing Hollin Busk for housing.

Answer:

Under draft proposals that were published in 2013, we proposed to protect Hollin Busk as a 'Countryside Area'. However, we have included the area as part of the [Green Belt Review](#) to enable us to assess how strongly it performs against Green Belt purposes. This will help us to reach a decision on whether there is a case for adding it to the Green Belt. In the Green Belt Review, it has been assessed in the same way as other pieces of land currently in the Green Belt, and other 'Countryside Areas'.

We have not yet made a decision on the spatial strategy for growth in Sheffield – that is the subject of the current Issues and Options consultation. Consequently, no decisions have been made yet on whether land should be removed from, or added, to the Green Belt as part of producing the new Sheffield Plan. The Green Belt Review does, however, identify some locations where changes to the boundary could be made to correct anomalies.

As we work towards producing the Publication Draft Sheffield Plan in 2021, we will be considering whether any of the Countryside Areas should (a) be added to the Green Belt, (b) be protected from development by other policies or (c) be allocated for new housing or other uses. A key issue with the land at Hollin Busk would be whether it is realistic to protect it as 'open space' when it is largely not publicly accessible. However, we also recognise the strength of local feeling in relation to keeping the area permanently open. These issues must be balanced as part of the decision as to how to designate the land within the Sheffield Plan.

2. At the heart of the Sheffield Plan is the Green Belt Review. I have read this carefully and I am extremely concerned at the subjective way green belt areas have been assessed. You have actually used an area where I have lived for over 70 years as an example in Figure 4 on page 22. I know this area extremely well and my Grandfather farmed the Southey and Doe Royd areas before the creation of the Parsons Cross and Southey estates so I also know the history. The illustration and the subsequent numerical assessment completely distorts the truth by classifying the semi-rural roads, The Wheel and Wheel Lane, as part of the "suburban sprawl" and, as such, uses that as a reason to mark the green belt as not having succeeded in its primary aim.

In truth, the houses on those two roads were nearly all there by 1939, well before the green belt. It is a single string of houses and for half of the road, these are only on

one side. There has been almost no development on the Ecclesfield village and Grenoside village side although the previous Sheffield side of Yew Lane and roads off it has been developed right to the boundary of the green belt. The green belt was there to prevent the sprawl of the then Sheffield Council estate from impinging on the then West Riding villages of Ecclesfield and Grenoside. If you compared the map before the green belt and now, it is clear that the green belt has done a superb job in its primary objective. The land is actively farmed with either crops or animals, is treasured by the residents around it as can be seen by the very many people walking the footpaths in this ongoing period of semi-lockdown. So the scoring of the area against the primary objectives is completely incorrect. I therefore have to assume the ratings for the whole report are similarly tainted.

So the question: - Why was not the green belt review carried out by comparing before and after maps rather than using subjective, personal and potentially political analysis? I would ask that the green belt review is re-done using objective before and after analysis by an independent body.

Answer:

The [Green Belt Review](#) was carried out in-house by planning officers, following a clear methodology which focusses on considering the purposes of Green Belt as set out in national policy. As such there is no political aspect to the analysis. The assessments are as objective as possible, although there does sometimes need to be an element of subjectivity in order to make a judgement about the overall performance against a particular Green Belt purpose, especially where that might differ across a single piece of land. If you have concerns about how a particular area of land has been scored, then we are happy to take a look at the assessment. We will make any necessary changes to the score if we believe a mistake has been made.

We would reiterate the point that the Green Belt Review provides an assessment of how well areas of land perform against the nationally described 'purposes' of Green Belt. The role of the Green Belt Review is not to propose land for removal from the Green Belt for housing or other development. Changes to the Green Belt boundary can only be made in exceptional circumstances and through the preparation of a new Local Plan (such as the Sheffield Plan).

3. Can separate submissions be made on the Sheffield Plan in addition to answering the questions in the questionnaire?

Answer: *We are encouraging people to fill in the questionnaire on the website – there is a facility to upload separate documents to support your answers. This will make it easier for us to process the comments. However, we will also accept other submissions if there are matters that you feel are not covered by the questions. These can be emailed to us at Sheffieldplan@sheffield.gov.uk*

4. How will you decide/ choose which Green Belt land is designated for development?

Answer:

The Sheffield Plan Issues and Options document sets out three broad spatial approaches which we could take to deliver the number of new homes that are needed in the city. Option A proposes no Green Belt release. Options B and C propose varying degrees of Green Belt release. However, no decision has yet been made on whether we will need to release land from the Green Belt for development. If, following the consultation, we conclude that there are exceptional circumstances to justify removing land from the Green Belt, then we will use the criteria in the site selection methodology to determine which sites should be allocated for development. Under national planning policy, we are required to give priority to brownfield sites in the Green Belt and/or those sites that are well-served by public transport.

The criteria we will use to select allocated sites are set out in the Issues and Options document and were listed in the presentation. Further information on this can be found in the [Site Selection Technical Note](#).

5. If residents are totally against a development, is there an appeals process?

Answer:

When the Publication Draft Sheffield Plan is published for consultation (in 2021) residents will be able to object to any of the proposed site allocations. Those objections would be considered as part of the Sheffield Plan Public Examination that will be undertaken by an independent Planning Inspector. The Inspector may invite residents to attend public hearings that will be held as part of the Examination.

For planning applications for specific developments, residents are able to object during the period that the planning application is being determined.

6. Are there systems in place to prevent developers from obtaining an influential decision in their favour to allow development on Green Belt land?

Answer

See our answer to Question 6 at the [Question and Answer session held on 3rd September 2020](#).

7. Can developers' proposals be viewed?

Answer

As part of the Sheffield Plan Issues and Options consultation we have made a [map](#) available which shows all areas of land in the city (including land in the Green Belt) that have been put forward for development by land owners, agents or developers (through the 2019 'Call for Sites'). The map forms part of the ['Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment'](#) (HELAA). However, as noted above, inclusion of sites in the HELAA does not necessarily mean that those sites are going to be developed, simply that they are 'available' for development (meaning there is a willing landowner).

Planning applications for development can be viewed on the Council's website.

8. If Green Belt was a last resort, what would take priority:
- (a) Building closer to City; or
 - (b) Building on the outskirts of the city?

Answer

The Green Belt, by its very nature, largely covers open land on the outskirts of the city. However, there are some narrow wedges of land that extend inwards towards the centre of the city. In the [Site Selection Technical Note](#), we highlight the type of issues which we would take into consideration when deciding which sites to put forward as proposed allocations. This would include prioritising sites brownfield sites in the Green Belt and those that are well-served by public transport.

9. Will your decision be to build be in localised areas, or spread evenly around the City?

Answer

This will depend on which option we take forward from the current Sheffield Plan Issues and Options. Option A would not include any significant development on land currently within the Green Belt, whereas Options B and C would include some Green Belt release to a greater or lesser extent. If we do go ahead with any Green Belt release, the distribution of sites will be determined in accordance with the Site Selection Methodology, dependent on sites' relative accessibility, availability, impact on Green Belt purposes and many other factors.

Given that the latest [Sheffield and Rotherham Strategic Housing Market Assessment](#) shows there is a need for new homes in all areas of the city, we are likely to aim to provide a spread of sites across the city. However, some areas have more environmental constraints than others and this will need to be balanced against social and economic objectives. We are interested in hearing views on this issue.

10. Which areas of Sheffield are more preferable for development?

Answer:

As noted under Question 9 above, all areas of Sheffield have a need for new homes. We will aim to give priority to development on brownfield sites within the existing built-up areas but some parts of the city have fewer brownfield sites and, therefore, fewer sites available for development. This would include many areas in the south and west of the city.

11. How do you take into account, when developing an area, the strain or availability of the local transport network?

Answer:

We will consider a range of different site development scenarios that will be tested using a Strategic Transport Model which forecasts the impact on the capacity of the city's road and public transport network. As part of that we will consider how any adverse impacts could be mitigated, for example through improvements to road

junctions, improvements to public transport or new facilities that enable more trips to be taken on foot or by cycle.

When deciding which sites to allocate, we will give priority to sites that are close to high frequency public transport routes or those where there are plans for new services to be introduced. Through this process, continual discussions with public transport operators and South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive will be undertaken, to ensure that where demand for services is reaching capacity, operational improvements will be considered to ensure that the appropriate level of supply can be provided.

12. If you are considering developing land on the outskirts, particularly rural areas, what will be done to tackle the lack of public transport?

Answer

Where development scenarios are likely to have an impact or requirement for public transport provision, we will consider the suitability of connections in discussion with South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive, who have the statutory responsibility for overseeing the public transport network and are a key stakeholder in those discussions. Requirements will be identified within the site allocations document, which will provide the mechanism for provision through the planning application process.

In addition, we will use a Strategic Transport Model to test the impact of a range of development scenarios. Should this demonstrate the need for new or enhanced public transport provision to support sustainable access to large development sites or clusters of sites, we will seek to identify funding opportunities to secure the required capital investment to help provide the enabling infrastructure.

13. For rural areas there is a concern that you would be putting significant additional strain on the utilities network e.g: Broadband, Power, Water, Sewage. What improvement would be done?

Answer:

Utility providers are being consulted as part of the consultation on Issues and Options. They will also be consulted on site options before any decisions are taken on which sites should be proposed as allocated sites in the Publication Draft Sheffield Plan.

The developer would normally be required to pay for any improvements to utility infrastructure that is needed as part of the development. This would be the subject of planning conditions attached to the planning permission or a legal agreement between the Council and the developer.

Where major new utility infrastructure is required (that is beyond what the developer could reasonably be expected to provide), this may be funded through bids to central Government for funding. One of the benefits of having a new Local Plan is that, if

infrastructure providers know where large scale development is proposed, they can produce plans to provide any necessary infrastructure as part of their investment programmes.

Money paid into the Community Infrastructure Levy (a type of development tax that has to be paid for most types of development) could also be used to support the delivery of new or improved utility infrastructure.

We are producing an Infrastructure List derived from the current Local Plan priorities and will produce an Infrastructure Delivery Plan as evidence for the next draft of the Local Plan that will analyse infrastructure needs in much more detail.

14. What considerations are taken for road access to a potential new site, if the existing road access is only classed as single carriageway or cul-de-sac as additional housing on such roads would put extra strain on an unsuitable narrow road, and cause an otherwise quiet road to become a thoroughfare.

Answer:

The Local Plan will identify high level access issues relating to large sites and clusters of sites, but the specific interventions at this scale would be subject to a planning application being progressed on the site. Through the Local Plan site allocation process, we will consider the suitability of access in relation to the scale and type of developments being proposed, identify physical constraints and new infrastructure requirements. Once a planning application is submitted and more details of the site context are understood, the specific issues related to the access will be tested using more localised and detailed evidence specific to the development being proposed, such as traffic counts, junction modelling and adherence to highway design principles.

15. How are these considered within the planning application and would existing properties be affected?

Answer:

The developer would be required to submit details of how they intend to address these issues in a Planning Statement that accompanies the planning application.

It is possible that a developer's proposals could have an impact on existing properties but this would be taken into account as part of the assessment. Where appropriate, the applicant could be asked to amend their proposal to address any concerns raised, for example, by Highways officers, utility companies or the Environment Agency.

16. What consideration on mining/ land history is taken into account?

Answer

The Coal Authority and the Environment Agency will both be consulted on site options before any decisions are taken on which sites should be proposed as allocated sites in the Publication Draft Sheffield Plan. Sites allocations will not be proposed on land that is unstable or unsafe, unless any risks can be overcome. The developer may also be required to undertake detailed ground investigations at the planning application stage.

17. Will consideration be given to significant disruption to current resident's properties and view and also potential property devaluation?

Answer

Under planning law there is no entitlement to a view or any requirement for local planning authorities to take account of the impact of development on existing property values. Matters such as loss of natural light or privacy are, however, planning matters that can be taken into account.

Conditions are frequently attached to planning permissions which aim to minimise any disruption to existing residents that may occur during construction (e.g. in relation to hours of operation).

18. What is the step by step process for:

- (a) the release of Green Belt for building
- (b) approval for planning permission on Green Belt land

Answer

Green Belt land can only be released through the preparation and adoption of a new Local Plan (such as the Sheffield Plan) and exceptional circumstances have to be demonstrated for any changes to be made to the Green Belt boundary.

The Sheffield Plan is not scheduled to be adopted until September 2023. If sites are removed from the Green Belt, the landowner or a developer would then need to apply for planning permission before development could take place. For larger sites, a master plan or planning brief might also be produced to provide more detailed guidance in advance of a planning application being submitted. These would normally be subject to further public consultation.

Developers or landowners can submit a planning application for development in the Green Belt at any time. However, developers are usually reluctant to do so unless they think very special circumstances can be demonstrated that would justify a departure from local and national policies. The Council has to consider any applications that are submitted but applications that conflict with current policies are more likely to be refused planning permission.