

From: Colin Berry
Sent: 04 June 2018 15:37
To: Yvonne Parker
Subject: RE: Matter 37 - site H442

Dear Mrs Parker

I am responding formally on behalf of Spen Valley Civic Society. We ask the Planning Inspector to consider the following points.

1. It is inappropriate that Kirklees Council and Strata Homes are working so closely together to promote this site. It compromises the Council's ability to produce a fair and objective assessment.
2. We challenge the detail contained in the statement. Roberttown is not joined to Liversedge and it does not form one large urban area. It is correct to state that Liversedge and Norristhorpe are largely connected – this has long since been the case – but there is a significant gap between Roberttown and Liversedge.
3. Norristhorpe and Roberttown are connected as a consequence of development along the A62. However this has been the case for many years, with the locations and developments much as they were when the Unitary Development Plan was agreed, and when the Green Belt gap, which now comprises H442, was preserved as it performed the function of separation of distinct settlements. That is still the case today.
4. It cannot be considered acceptable to claim that settlements are connected, and therefore appropriate for development, by virtue of the presence of buildings along a main road – in this case the A62. If that were the case there would be no green belt allocations in the whole of the Spen Valley, as all roads have some degree of development. This is true for most of Kirklees, except for the most rural of communities, and we cannot find that this argument has been used anywhere else in the Local Plan to justify development.
5. Roberttown retains a green belt gap along all its boundaries, and so retains a distinct and separate identity, despite the largely built up nature of the surrounding areas. This was recognised by decisions taken in respect of other proposed allocations in draft Local Plan.
6. Sites H317, H155, and H7 all surround Roberttown, mainly to the south and east, and all were rejected as housing allocations on the basis that development would reduce the gap between settlements; the significance of the green belt function in this urban fringe area is recorded as a reason for site rejection.
7. Map 4 in the appendix to the statement of common ground clearly shows that the settlements of Roberttown and Norristhorpe are kept separate by H442, except for the junction of Lumb Lane and the A62. It is a small gap, but even more important as a consequence.
8. Kirklees Council originally assessed H442 as a rejected housing option with no exceptional circumstances to warrant removal from the green belt. They were challenged at the Hearing to explain the reversal of the decision, but were unable to do so, except for saying that it was the result of the consultation process. That process had resulted in unanimous support for the rejection, bar one – Strata Homes. We are concerned that the consultation process can be weighted so heavily in favour of one source. The Council have failed to provide any other justification for the decision reversal, other than to state that there is a need for additional housing. This is not sufficient ground to justify the allocation of this key site, which continues to perform a vital green belt function.
9. In respect of this particular site the objective assessment of the Council cannot be trusted. For whatever reason they have succumbed to the lobbying from Strata Homes and have joined with them to promote the site. In doing so they have compromised themselves and

failed to recognise the true value of H442 as green belt land which continues to fulfil the prevention of the merger of separate and distinct communities.

I suspect that this response is not quite as short and succinct as you had hoped, but I have tried my best.

Regards

Colin Berry

On behalf of Spen Valley Civic Society