

March 2023

Dear resident,

I am writing to you today to update you on the situation regarding proposals in the Council's draft Local Plan. Firstly, the good news is the confirmation over the future of Owlthorpe Fields.

The Owlthorpe Fields Action Group should be incredibly proud about what they have achieved, and they should take the credit for this. They have worked tirelessly alongside my office and me to achieve this, and I hope it will be welcome news to all Owlthorpe residents.

We have managed to secure the future of the area with no future development planned for the remaining sites. I expect that this is unlikely to change when the final version of the draft Local Plan is published. Once the Council publishes its final plan it goes to the Planning Inspectorate who may hold either a written, but more probably, a public inquiry. I shall be ready to work with the Action Group to oppose any arguments from housing developers to get the sites re-designated for housing.

The other main issue of local concern is the proposal in the draft Local Plan is with regard to designating a site off Eckington Way for industrial use and a traveller site. Given the current congestion and traffic concerns, this site would put further pressure on a road network already struggling with heavy congestion. Residents, rightly, have been concerned across the ward, so I have been writing to all areas in Beighton explaining what has happened and what I am doing, with the help of my assistant Michael Chilton, to oppose the use of the site for travellers.

First of all, I think it is important to explain briefly the context and background to this. To begin with, the Local Plan has been drawn up by a working group of the three main political parties on the Council: Greens, Liberal Democrat and Labour. Currently no political party has a majority on Sheffield City Council which means that the three parties have to reach a consensus in order to pass any policy.

This is why the working group was formed to make decisions and present a draft Local Plan. Once this was done the draft Local Plan was sent out to councillors in July. This included the three Beighton councillors. They then had five months to consult over the plan and provide feedback.

As far as I am aware, the three Beighton councillors did not during this time raise issues about any of the sites in Beighton, including the one on Eckington Way. As a result, when the draft Local Plan was presented to full Council on the 14 December, there was an opportunity to table amendments to the plan. Despite having known about the site since July, none of the Beighton councillors took this opportunity to raise an amendment, or object to the site in any way. They then voted for the Local Plan.

Since January it has now been open to public consultation. After being contacted by residents who raised this issue with us, I, along with my assistant Michael Chilton, have been working with residents of Beighton to oppose this site. We have serious concerns that this site is being allocated without any recent studies on traffic and pollution, or a substantial traffic improvement plan to address the current issues. In summary, no development should happen on this site until these three points have been addressed.

We have convened a panel of residents who live locally, with whom we are working on this issue, alongside collating objections for submission, including my own. There have also been two petitions with over 3,000 signatures which have been presented to full Council by Michael Chilton showing the strength of feeling on this issue.

In order to avoid any confusion, the Council cannot pass a resolution now in anticipation of a formal consideration of all submissions made in response to the draft Local Plan. The petition submitted by Michael Chilton will be considered with all other comments. Michael and I will continue to lead the objections and demand the production of a proper Infrastructure Plan showing how the traffic congestion which has grown incrementally over the years will be properly addressed before any new developments are approved in the Beighton and Mosborough wards.

I hope this has been useful for you in understanding the situation and what steps we are taking. I also currently have a mailing list for residents who share these concerns about the site allocation, off Eckington Way. If you would like to be added or have any other questions, then please just email my office at officeofclivebettsmp@parliament.uk.

Finally, I know the Avant Homes development has caused problems and concerns for many local residents. I've taken up many of these including, mud on the roads, tyres punctured by construction material on the roads, trees cut down, sludge going into the Ochre Dike, and encroachment beyond the building site. Working again with the Action Group we've managed to get enforcement action from the Council's officers though problems still continue.

Please contact me, or my assistant, Michael Chilton, at officeofclivebettsmp if you have comments or concerns on these or any other matters.

All the best,

Clive Betts

MP for Sheffield South East