**An Additional Response from Friends of Hollin Busk to Application Hollin Busk 17/04673/OUT – January 2020.**

FOHB sent a document in July 2019 which fundamentally disagreed with many of the recommendations of the initial Case Officer’s Report. We thought the report inadequate, misleading and biased. The report has now been withdrawn. Since that time FOHB have been continuing to strengthen their case through discussions with planning expertise and local councillors. This document makes additional points and expands on some existing items in the FOHB July 2019 document.

1. Landscape Impact.

“The land at Hollin Busk is a large and integral part of the countryside south of Stocksbridge, prominent in local views and providing an important visual break between the settlements of Stocksbridge and Deepcar. Its rural character is greatly valued locally and there is no need to develop it, as new housing can be provided on previously developed land within the urban area. Protection of the area as open countryside makes a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of Stocksbridge” Core Strategy 2009 CS72.

Hollin Busk is part of a green link that prevents urban sprawl across the whole hillside. This green, open space has wide views across the Stocksbridge valley and is highly regarded as a local amenity. It is much valued by pedestrians and equestrians due to its relatively level topography along the upper part of the hillside. Previous attempts to develop Hollin Busk were turned down and there is now an extremely high level of local feeling about these green fields, evidenced by the 500 objections to this application.

Hollin Busk is one of only a few greenfield locations in Sheffield where an application for development has been made. It is not in the Greenbelt, it was left out in error, but this was remedied by giving it “protected open countryside” status. It is not in the housing plan but has been targeted by the applicant for opportunistic development. The landscape is unique and valued locally, and the landscape impact of development would be significant.

2. Sheffield Core Strategy 2009 / NPPF Alignment.

Sheffield City Council have been consistent in their policy of protecting this site. This is clearly stated in Sheffield Core Strategy 2009 CS72. Despite the age of this policy and the absence of a new Local Plan, the NPPF is clear that existing policies should not be considered out of date simply because they were issued prior to the NPPF. These Core Strategy policies are closely aligned to the NPPF and NPPF para 213 states that they should therefore be afforded significant weight. Furthermore, under current NPPF 139d requirements it would be necessary for the next Sheffield Local Plan to rescind Core Policy CS72, which specifically protects Hollin Busk land, before it can be allocated as housing development land.

3. Sheffield Core Strategy Policy Safeguarding Hollin Busk.

The Sheffield Core Strategy identifies specific areas of countryside around the city that are not in the Greenbelt, but are safeguarded in the spatial strategy to the same extent as land that is in the Greenbelt, and they have been given equally strong protection from development.

These areas are greatly valued for the way they contribute to Core Strategy objectives for the natural environment, rural settings and opportunities for peaceful enjoyment of the countryside. Hollin Busk is a greenfield site in the rural fringe outside the urban areas of Stocksbridge and Deepcar and has been designated as not to be developed.

Hollin Busk is safeguarded and protected in the Sheffield Core Strategy 2009. CS72 describes why Hollin Busk should be protected and G6A describes how it will be protected. “The green, open and rural character of areas on the edge of built-up areas, but not in the Greenbelt, will be safeguarded through protection as open countryside, including the following locations: d) south of Stocksbridge (at Hollin Busk)”. Sheffield Core Strategy clearly states that Hollin Busk is safeguarded land for environmental protection reasons. “There is no need to develop it, as new housing can be provided on previously developed land within the urban area”. The Housing Land Map on the Sheffield City Council website does not identify the Hollin Busk land for housing development.

4. Sheffield City Council Policy and Recent Statements.

Sheffield’s declared policy is to prioritise new housing developments on brownfield sites. The regeneration of old industrial sites into areas suitable for good housing accomplishes the twin objectives of, reuse of valuable land that would otherwise be derelict, and the provision of much needed good quality housing. There are 4 good examples already underway in the Upper Don Valley, at Fox Valley in Stocksbridge, Park Drive Stocksbridge, Station Road in Deepcar and at the old paper mill site in Oughtibridge. These four sites alone will provide nearly 900 new homes. This removes the need to consider expansion of housing into valuable green open countryside.

In summer 2019 the full Sheffield Council voted to reiterate that Sheffield LPA’s future growth strategy would continue to be the redevelopment of brownfield sites, and not expansion into open countryside. The Leader of Sheffield Council was quoted in the Sheffield Telegraph on 3/10/19 as saying “Building on the Greenbelt should be an absolute last resort. We are proud of being the greenest city in Europe and with the climate emergency, green spaces are even more important to people than they were three years ago”.

5. Five Years Housing Land Supply.

Sheffield LPA has spent some considerable time recalculating its 5 year housing supply figure. In early 2019 a new figure of 5.04 years was used on new applications but this was subsequently quickly rescinded. Recent applications have therefore reverted to using the old 2018 figure until a new figure is announced. As the calculation depends on actual planned house completions, rather than applications that are approved but undelivered, it would appear, to the common man, that delays in delivery by developers could influence this figure. FOHB support a thorough and accurate calculation of this figure. FOHB have always argued that because The Core Strategy already conforms strongly with NPPF it still retains full weight. A new figure above 5 years would remove any circuitous arguments to the contrary, and removes the applicant’s argument that earlier Council policies should be afforded limited weight.

6. Open Space Provision.

Hollin Busk has been given special status in the Core Strategy as protected open countryside. The application site is part of a privately owned area of open countryside, used as grazing land, which is not accessible to the public. Its value to the community is the visual amenity afforded by its open character and appearance. The visual benefit is enhanced by the public being able to walk along the road bordering the site, in the open countryside with extensive views across the valley. It does not require physical access to maintain its value as an open space. The proposed development would cause significantly harm to the open character of the area contrary to UDP Policy LR5. Keeping the site undeveloped contributes positively to the objectives of NPPF paras 118(b), 127 and 170(B).

The applicant’s provision of some “open space” to which they would allow public access is totally disingenuous. Firstly, there is currently open space all around, with the Green belt within 500m, and secondly, nobody wants access to this area as the public amenity value is from the open character with its tremendous views.

7. Location and Transport.

Hollin Busk is located 1km up a steep hill from the valley bottom. All the main roads, shops and main amenities are located below in the valley. The main access to the site, Carr Road, was used as a category hill climb in the Tour de Yorkshire. The site is not currently directly served by any bus route. The NPPF para 110 states that developments should “give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and within neighbouring areas; and second, as far as possible, to facilitating access to high quality public transport”. Google maps shows that a journey to the centre of Stocksbridge would take 23 minutes on foot, 20-25 minutes by bus, and 4 minutes by car. There is then a very steep hill to climb on the return. It is therefore inevitable that the overwhelming majority of local journeys will be made by car and it is disingenuous to suggest that the site is reasonably accessible by foot and cycle. This application for housing, on the top of the hill side, is in an inappropriate location that does not conform to NPPF requirements on accessibility and sustainability.

The increased volume of transport on Carr Road (the main access route) will contribute to an already difficult situation at the traffic light junction with Manchester Road where traffic volume exceeds capacity at peak times. In addition, another development to build 427 homes at Station Road, Deepcar will also be a new feed into the same junction.

The proposed access to the new development for construction lorries and new residents is virtually opposite Royd Nursery and Infants School. This would present an increased highway hazard for young children crossing the road at the start and end of the school day when there are already a high number of stationary vehicles along both sides of the road.

8. Environment and Ecology.

Hollin Busk is located directly above Fox Glen, a Local Wildlife Site that was gifted to the local people. Surface water drainage is into Clough Dyke that then feeds down through Fox Glen. There are regular incidents of flash flooding in Fox Glen, most recently in October 2019 when houses on Wood Royd Road were flooded. The proposed new housing would sit at the top of Fox Glen and significantly affect the feed of surface water down Clough Dyke.

Part of Sheffield City Council’s Policy for a green city is to maximise green networks with green links to open countryside. There is a green link that separates the urbanisation of Stocksbridge with that of Deepcar. This green link comprises the green fields at Wood Royd, these link into Fox Glen, which in turn links to the green fields at Hollin Busk and open countryside. The proposed development would sever this green link at the top of Fox Glen and isolate the LWS from open countryside.

In 2017 Sheffield Council asked the developers to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment primarily with regard to the local bird population. The developers were successful in having the ruling overturned by the Planning Inspector. FOHB and local people believe that the limitation of the EIA justification to only birds was too narrow and think that all of the environment aspects should have been considered. We would strongly urge the LPA to carefully consider the impact of the development of Hollin Busk on the biodiversity not only of the application site but also nearby Fox Glen.

9. Heritage.

The historical landscape of the Stocksbridge valley, before the textile mill and subsequent steel works were built, was one of a series of individual farms along the upper parts of the valley sides. These are still there and Royd Farm and Wood Royd Farm are two of them. The same developer has submitted two applications, one to demolish Wood Royd Farm and build on its green fields, and the Hollin Busk application which would surround Royd Farm on three side with housing and significantly affect the setting of a Grade 2 listed building. NPPF para 196 sets out how this harm should be addressed and balanced against public benefits. There are guidelines to adopt a presumption of refusal for this harm. FOHB believe that this harm is significant and makes the site unsustainable and is sufficient grounds for refusal of the application.

10. Sustainability.

The Government, through the NPPF, has facilitated building more houses but recognises the risks of uncontrolled development – “the right homes in the right places”. The NPPF seeks to build more homes of the right type in areas which are sustainable and also gives stronger protection for the countryside. The applicant makes sweeping assumptions and statements that this application is sustainable. The factual evidence does not support this. There are very good reasons why this this application is unsustainable.

* Significant detrimental harm to the Environment and Ecology. This was recognised in the previous legal judgement regarding building on this site.
  + Adverse effect on local appreciation of an area given special protection as “open countryside”.
  + Contrary to Council policy of green networks and links.
  + Does not support Council policy of brownfield regeneration first.
  + Severs the link of LWS Fox Glen to open countryside and impacts on local wildlife.
  + The location will have a significant effect on surface water drainage and flood risk down Clough Dyke and Fox Glen.
* Prominent usage of private cars due to site location, topography, and the distance to local amenities.
* Harm to heritage assets.
* Significant traffic Implications. Detrimental contribution to the already significant traffic congestion at the Carr Road/Manchester Road junction. The new access road is virtually opposite the local school.

Summary.

There is a high level of local feeling against this application. This has been exacerbated by the confusion created by two short-notice withdrawals from the Planning Committee Meeting Agenda and subsequent withdrawal of the Case Officer’s Report. FOHB remain resolute in opposition to this application. A review of the case should take note of the detail in many of the 500 objections where factual evidence has been presented to counter the applicant’s inaccurate statements and misleading claims.

The overall view is best described by the still-relevant statement in CS72:-

“The land at Hollin Busk is a large and integral part of the countryside south of Stocksbridge, prominent in local views and providing an important visual break between the settlements of Stocksbridge and Deepcar. Its rural character is greatly valued locally and there is no need to develop it, as new housing can be provided on previously developed land within the urban area. Indeed, protection of the area makes a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of Stocksbridge”.

FOHB believe that this application should be refused and the Hollin Busk green fields given Greenbelt status as was the original intention.

Dr Peter Morgan – Friends of Hollin Busk. December 2019

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