**Presentation to the Planning Inspector, Mr Stephen Normington, Appeal Ref APP/J4423/W/21/3267168 on 25th June 2021**

**My name is Elaine Smith, member of FOHB**

Today I am speaking about the site of Hollin Busk and sustainability issues.

We know that developers tried to get their hands on the land at Hollin Busk in 1989 when Enterprises Charlamand submitted a planning application that was refused. Following an appeal, the Council’s decision was upheld. We are all aware of the comments the inspector made at the time in relation to the separation of the communities of Deepcar and Stocksbridge about the landscape and creating an ‘open wedge’ leading to the heart of the built-up area. There was a very strong local opposition to the proposed development in 1989 and that fierce opposition remains today. The inspector’s view is just as relevant today as it was then.

The Land and Visual Appraisal (LVA) makes the point that the site itself has very little in the way of significant landscape features and that it is not ‘out of the ordinary’ in landscape terms. We accept that our view from Hollin Busk cannot be compared with the landscape say, in the Peak District but, in this largely urban environment, it is OUR distinctive and remarkable view across the valley. Hollin Busk is an area of upland pasture enclosed within traditional stone walls and is distinctly rural in character. This open area, with far reaching views is tranquil and peaceful and the nearby urban areas are not visible. If I turn around and look to the south I see a similar upland pasture view which is in the Green Belt.

In the Proof of Evidence in relation to Landscape and Visual matters Mr Brian Denney challenges the actual location of Hollin Busk referring to current and old OS mapping. A report was produced dated 16 March 2007 by Les Sturch, Head of Planning Division. Its purpose was to inform the North Area Panel about a detailed history of the development of planning policy for the Hollin Busk Site. This was being considered as part of the preparation of the Core Strategy for the Sheffield Development Framework. This report explains the planning history of the site and describes the circumstances that have led to the site’s Open Space Area designation in the adopted Unitary Development Plan. The site plan is shown in the appendices and Appendix 4 shows the Deposit UDP Proposals Map extract showing the whole site is designated as Open Space Area. The site is 43 acres in total and the map includes the fields adjoining Broomfield Lane and Hollin Busk Road, extending through the green fields to Carr Road on that side of Hollin Busk Road. In 1995 there was a UDP Public Enquiry that included Hollin Busk. The Inspector’s report dated March 1997 noted that it was a matter for the Council to decide whether or not to include this site in the Green Belt. The site hasn’t been left out of the Green Belt on purpose. Whilst putting the site in the Green Belt was the preferred option the Council had to take a strategic view to protect the whole of Sheffield’s Green Belt. The Inspector said “Having looked at all the relevant planning issues presented to me, I am satisfied that the designation of this site as a housing area has not been justified. The proposed designation of the site as an Open Space Area is reasonable in the context of the tests of policy LR4. I see no overriding reason not to support the intentions of the Deposit version of the UDP. This protected open space area is currently enshrined in CS72 - the compliance requirements specifying that no land should be developed for urban land use in the period to 2026.

What is valued locally is the walk and views from the site of Hollin Busk itself. It is one of the few, if not **the only flat** walk in the Stocksbridge area that is in open countryside – hence its name Busk Flat. It may be only 500m in length but it is enjoyed every day by parents and carers pushing prams and those with toddlers, the elderly and wheelchair users. It is also well used by walkers, runners, cyclists and schoolchildren and even more so during the Pandemic. Mr Denney refers to “highway users” and says they have inherently lower sensitivity and their views towards the site would be more fleeting. By “highway users” I assume he means drivers of cars or other vehicles. When driving into Hollin Busk Lane from Carr Road you pass from the urban area into the open countryside and people do take notice of this change in landscape. In fact one objector who is a Health Care Worker from another town commented on how much she enjoyed this landscape when working in the area.

Mr Denney disagrees that the open area of Hollin Busk creates an **open wedge** coming from one urban area and leading to another as he claims Stocksbridge and Deepcar are already connected with the northern extent of both settlements running interchangeably into one another on the B6088. He says that when moving through the area on foot or in the car, the separate identity of settlements is not apparent as they have already merged and flow from one to the other in a complex townscape. However, when travelling along the B6088 when reaching the Stocksbridge sign there is an avenue of trees that provide a short green break between the built-up areas.

People predominantly travel along the B6088 by car or bus and probably take little notice of their surroundings. Whilst there may be a near connection of settlements in the Valley bottom, it strengthens the argument to retain the only open area that is used extensively for recreation purposes, that separates Stocksbridge and Deepcar - to stop the creep of urban sprawl and loss of identity for the community of Deepcar. Within our community there is a strong sense of ‘belonging’ and identity with the area in which people live.

Hollin Busk is our community’s much loved and highly valued **visual amenity** used by all age groups**.** This proposed development will cause unreasonable harm to the established landscape that is prominent in local views. It will undermine the physical and visual separation of Stocksbridge and Deepcar. A comment on the Community Forum page echoes the views of many. “I don’t know anyone who lives here who wants this last green space between Stocksbridge and Deepcar built upon except the landowners and developers who will profit from it. Once it’s lost, it’s lost forever.”

Our community is not against building houses. Others will confirm the scale of new building on brownfield and infill sites. It is about building the right homes in the right place. Hollin Busk is not the right location to build houses and the local community wants it to be left as it is to be enjoyed by all.

**SUSTAINABILITY**

We do not believe that Hallam Land Management has demonstrated that this is a sustainable development for our area. We note that in the Statement of Common Ground it is agreed that the site is appropriately accessible to a range of facilities on foot and has acceptable access to public transport services. However, with our local knowledge of using services and public transport as described in the application, we want to raise our concerns about the lack of sustainability. These facilities and services are not easily accessible on foot and public transport has its limitations.

The Appellant’s Transport Assessment states and accepts that journeys by car will be the dominant mode of transport. It would be reasonable to estimate that there would be around 170 cars on this site. Although the appellant has made reference to walking distances to shops, medical facilities and leisure facilities (470m to 1.9km) it is most likely that people would drive in preference to walking. Reliance on the private car undermines the important objectives of the National Framework and is unsustainable.

The proposed site is at the top of an extreme upper elevation of Deepcar and this area is VERY hilly. In the 2014 Tour de Yorkshire Cycle Race, Carr Road was designated ‘Côte de Deepcar’, one of the 8 Hill Climbs in the final stage. People do the majority of their shopping in Stocksbridge or Fox Valley – both in the valley bottom - or out of the area. Other facilities such as restaurants, pubs, takeaways, GP surgeries, dentists are all in the Valley bottom. These facilities are between 0.9 and 2 km away and the nearest convenience store is not nearby. None are realistically within easy walking distance. Who would walk this far for a pint of milk, a loaf of bread, a takeaway or to do a significant shop. Who would want to walk to the Doctors if you weren’t feeling very well. Stocksbridge Community Leisure Centre has not been mentioned and this is over 2 km away. With the exception of the Golf Club, all of these locations have one thing in common – the return walk is up very steep hills. The position of services and facilities in the Valley bottom reduces the attractiveness of journeys by foot. Lidl, Aldi, Iceland, Home Bargains, the Coop, medical services, the library etc are all 2km away. These facilities are around 480 feet above sea level. The site at Hollin Busk is 835 feet above sea level. So there is a height gain from the Valley bottom to the proposed site of 355 feet. (118 yards). Cycling in this steep, hilly area is not an option for most people.

Access to public transport is limited and the planning application acknowledged that bus stops are not nearby. The recommended maximum distance to a bus stop as provided by the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) should not exceed 400m and preferably no more than 300m. The only bus stop that meets this recommended distance is for the buses going to Barnsley and Penistone. There is just one bus a day to Barnsley which takes over an hour compared with a 25 minute car journey. There are just 3 buses a day to Penistone - the first arrives at Deepar at 0952 and is clearly of no use to commuters who might want to get to Penistone. It is also hopeless as a connection with the hourly train from Penistone to either Sheffield or Huddersfield and the train station is a considerable walk from the Penistone bus stop. If you worked in or wanted to visit Huddersfield the earliest arrival would be 1150 hrs. There is a new 26 service between Stocksbridge and Penistone but the nearest bus stop is 2km away.

For those going to Sheffield, the Supertram link bus stop is 600m away – 50% higher than the top recommended figure. The SL1 and SL1A follow 2 different routes. This is the most convenient service with buses operating every 12 minutes. However, in the morning rush period only the SL1 operates meaning that travellers getting on at Wood Royd would be taken around the houses through The Stubbin, Cedar Road and down Hole House Lane into Stocksbridge and then out again on the main road. This means that on a good day, it would take at least 30 minutes just to get to Middlewood Tram Stop for the onward journey to Sheffield. The 57 runs approximately every hour and goes around the streets of Oughtibridge and Worral adding more time onto an already long journey.

When travelling by public transport extra time of walking to a bus stop and waiting for the bus to arrive needs to be added to the total journey time. So if you lived in this proposed development and had a car sitting on your drive which option do you think most people would take when shopping, socialising or going to work? In the majority of cases, I would suggest it would be the car. The proposal does not meet sustainability requirements because this proposed development is in the wrong place. Better developments are underway in the Valley Bottom which are near to services and public transport.

I understand Section 4 of the NPPF relates to the promotion of public transport. I would argue that this application does not promote sustainable transport on the basis that this sit is not currently serve by a suitable bus route. The Common Theme of the National Framework is to promote sustainably located housing developments as opposed to the unplanned and unsustainable development for housing in the countryside. Significant housing should be located in sustainable locations.

The appeal documentation provides a detailed illustration of the site including the reduction from 93 to 85 dwellings. If this appeal is successful, this land will be sold on to a developer who will submit their own plans which could be entirely different from the indicative and illustrative content outlined here. Hollin Busk is an important feature of our landscape and that is why 500+ people took the time and trouble to post their objections to the application and 200+ people objected to the appeal.

This application has been refused by Sheffield City Council’s Planning Committee and we urge the Planning Inspector to uphold their decision.