

Dear Terry Heselton,

Dinnington St John's Neighbourhood Plan

Firstly thank you for the opportunity to comment on the submissions that were received as a result of the consultation which ended in December. The comments received have been discussed with the Neighbourhood Plan Group which has worked on behalf of Dinnington St. Johns Town Council to produce the Plan. Their feedback is as follows:

1. The comments that were received were in general from parties that have a commercial interest in the area and are generally criticisms/disagreement with some of the Plan's principles which would if adopted limit their flexibility to respond to local needs, priorities and distinctiveness. We would have hoped that these negative submissions would have been partially counteracted by supporters of the Plan and its ethos but unfortunately, due to IT problems at RMC, some members of the Public could not leave comments during the last 2 weeks of the consultation. This is the subject of a separate complaint already expressed to RMBC.

2. The major thrust of the comments received are from bodies representing developers who question the interpretation by the group developing the Plan of data concerning housing need.

In developing the Plan and its consequences for the local community, the plan group has taken a positive, evidence based, proportionate and collaborative approach to identifying and responding to local housing need. In doing this, we have sought dialogue with RMBC as well as potential developers. We have used proportionately all the data that is publicly available together with the local knowledge taken from residents and Estate Agents etc. Like any projections based on historical data, there will be errors when compared to the final actual numbers. This is particularly the case when looking at population numbers and consequent housing requirements. The history regarding projected house building in the UK is witness to this fact.

The housing numbers that were particularly important to the Neighbourhood Plan Group were related to meeting the "Local Housing Need" for Dinnington. We know very well the local families and individuals that want to own a property in Dinnington. We also know the families that are growing and are therefore wanting to upsize. It was against this background that we considered the housing requirement for Dinnington to be in the low hundreds. Our assertion that anything above this would require significant inward migration from Sheffield or other areas is the conclusion that we came to.

In particular, the lack of smaller starter homes is an issue and we felt that since the land that was being released to developers was on the edge of Green Belt any large scale development would continue to skew the mix towards larger properties.

The housing need related policies we believe are accurate, proportionate, based on the available evidence and sufficiently robust to justify the choices made.

3. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address existing issues (and opportunities) with regard to facilities for the Community as well as pointing out that, and seeking to plan for, an influx of over 3000 residents from outside of the area will place a significant

strain on local resources such as health, sports and leisure as well as transportation. We are not aware of any detailed Dinnington specific plans for infrastructure and other changes as a result of the potential planned housing and other forms of growth in Dinnington and the wider local area. Our fear is that full consideration is not being given to any of these issues either by RMBC or developers. This is one of the reasons why we determined to prepare the Plan. The assertion from developers that facilities follow housing is a flawed concept and flies in the face of Community cohesion. Many examples exist across the UK that this planning concept is outdated. Developments need to be holistic and are not just about building houses but are about developing and integrating communities.

The Neighbourhood Plan acknowledges that housing and other growth is needed in Rotherham and that Dinnington is a key area for this potential growth but other facilities are needed for a Healthy and good Community in Dinnington. Some of these are already lacking and the housing growth will place significant added strain on already stretched resources. The Town Centre is in dire need of improvement.

4. Some reference has been made to the involvement of residents and other parties in the process to arrive at the plan. We have taken a fair, transparent and proportionate approach to engagement and worked positively with all partners. All through the process RMBC, for example, were aware of public meetings and events. All of these interested parties were invited either directly where possible or through contact with RMBC as a conduit. Members of the local community and other stakeholders attended all the meetings held as part of the information gathering process and the feedback sessions at which the draft plan was presented. We are confident that we have considered any comments carefully and appropriately, and that the Plan generally fairly reflects the sentiments of those involved. We are therefore firmly of the opinion that the Plan is a true, robust and deliverable reflection of the needs and wishes of local residents in support of the Local Plan. It is unfortunate that some interested parties did not give their input during the two and a half years that the Plan has been in the process of developing.

5. We note that some comments have been received about the methodology used to identify the local green spaces and local character buildings. The Plan and associated supporting evidence documents provide detailed and proportionate justification for their selection against a range of established criteria. This criterion has been applied fairly and consistently. Each designation has also been tested through the consultation process. We are satisfied that they all meet the criteria for identification and designation. The methodology is based on a standard and well-tested approach used by the consultant helping the Group developing the Plan and has been successfully used by them in support of a number of other neighbourhood plans.

Best wishes

Kind regards

Al Evans

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