

PRESS STATEMENT

Rotherham Borough Council are now half way through the current consultation on the Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF is Rotherham's plan for housing and employment development for the next 15 years, and will set out how much development, and where it will be located. More consultation will happen as the plan develops.

Consultation at local events so far has seen over 1,000 local people taking the opportunity for a 1:1 discussion with planning officers on how proposals may affect their local communities.

The Council have been keen to stress from the outset that they want this consultation to be meaningful, open and effective. The potential impact on the green belt is a key issue which has been raised by many residents, and a series of meetings with the local Save Our Green Belt action group have been set up.

Strategic Director, Karl Battersby, feels that the consultation has benefited from the work with the Greenbelt group. "For this to be a meaningful consultation it is vital that we really do listen to the opinions of local people. I want all information to be open and accessible and I want local people to work with us to ensure that we get the best plan for Rotherham. We have been given a superb opportunity to come up with our own local plan rather than having an unrealistic number of houses forced upon us and I think people have understood this and want to help us get it right. We are the only Council in South Yorkshire who are looking to adopt our own local target, rather than run with the much greater regional target. The target is however not fixed, and we will be considering whether the figure needs to be revised further.

When we met with the Green belt Group we found that we shared a lot of common ground. We have already reduced the amount of greenbelt that is in our plans by 60 % and we are keen to make sure that we do not use any land that is not required. The discussions between officers and local people have been relevant, detailed and useful and we are coming away with many views on how people see the development of Rotherham. I could not be more pleased with the way the meetings are going, and the draft plans will change and be formed by the views of Rotherham people.

Our meetings with the Green belt Group are not over and we are keen to answer any queries that they may have. By working together it is my firm belief that Rotherham's local plan will be finely tuned and successful.

Many people have asked us why we need a plan at all. Put simply, if we do not submit a plan then the right to make decisions will be taken from us and we will be told how many homes we should have. We would be faced with numerous planning applications which would be difficult to resist, as the Government will require us to say yes to development if we don't have a plan in place. The sites that will (would) be chosen will be those most easy to develop, and most likely in the green belt. The impact on the green belt of not having a plan may therefore be greater than having a plan for Rotherham in place. That is something which I am sure we all want to avoid.

I think people have understood this and are genuinely committed to helping us get this right for Rotherham.

A spokesman for the Save Our Green Belt Action Group said ...