

Dronfield Town Council Feedback on the Issues & Options Consultation on the Emerging Local Plan (April 2026)

The Town Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the emerging Local Plan and to engage constructively in the consultation process. The Council recognises the importance of preparing a robust and evidence-led plan to guide future development within the District and is grateful for the opportunity to set out its views on the proposed housing strategy, spatial approach, and individual site allocations.

Comments on the Overall Housing Target

The emerging Local Plan proposes the delivery of approximately 12,000 new dwellings, equating to around 600 homes per annum, across North East Derbyshire. While the Town Council recognises the importance of meeting objectively assessed housing needs, it considers that there are significant concerns regarding the scale and justification of the proposed housing target. A number of factors, including evidence produced by the District Council itself, indicate that the proposed level of growth may not be justified, realistic, or deliverable.

Infrastructure Capacity

The District Council's Sustainability Appraisal Addendum acknowledges that it has been unable to assess GP and school capacity due to a lack of available data. This omission is significant, given the existing and increasing pressures on local infrastructure.

Recent admissions data for Henry Fanshawe School, the only secondary school serving Dronfield, demonstrates clear and sustained capacity issues. For the September 2023 intake, 353 pupils named the school as their first preference, while only approximately 298 places were offered, leaving over 50 children without a place. Similarly, for the September 2022 intake, the school was oversubscribed by 68 pupils. These pressures are not unique to Dronfield; Tupton Hall and Eckington Schools, the only other secondary schools within the District, are also oversubscribed.

With only three secondary schools serving the entirety of North East Derbyshire, a housing delivery rate of 600 dwellings per year is highly likely to exacerbate existing education capacity constraints. In addition, North East Derbyshire functions largely as a commuter district, meaning that significant housing growth will place further strain on an already congested road network, particularly during peak hours.

Population Trends and Demographic Evidence

The 2021 Census recorded a population increase of approximately 3% in North East Derbyshire between 2011 and 2021, indicating modest growth. Office for National

Statistics (ONS) population projections suggest moderate but steady growth over the next 20 years, well below national averages.

By contrast, the delivery of 12,000 new homes could result in an estimated population increase of around 25%, which is substantially higher than historic trends and future projections. This raises serious questions regarding whether such a level of housing provision is proportionate to demographic need.

Existing Local Plan Provision

The currently adopted Local Plan target of approximately 330 dwellings per annum would equate to around a 15% increase in housing stock over the plan period. This level of growth is significantly more aligned with projected population change identified in the latest ONS 2022-based Sub-National Population Projections, which forecast comparatively slow but continued growth across the District.

Given this evidence, the Town Council considers that the justification for increasing the housing target to 600 dwellings per annum has not been convincingly demonstrated.

Housing Delivery Rates and Market Realism

Recent housing delivery within North East Derbyshire has consistently averaged around 330 dwellings per year, providing a realistic indication of market absorption rates and developer build-out capacity.

Nearly doubling this annual target risks the premature and unnecessary release of sensitive land, including areas of Green Belt, without any guarantee that the homes will be built within the plan period. Experience suggests that granting permission alone does not ensure delivery, particularly at elevated target levels.

Local Employment and Commuting Patterns

Analysis of Census 2021 data, ONS labour-market statistics, and Derbyshire Observatory evidence demonstrates that a significant proportion of North East Derbyshire residents, particularly in Dronfield, work outside the District. Key commuting destinations include Sheffield, Chesterfield, and Derby, with commuting overwhelmingly car-based.

As such, delivering an additional 12,000 homes without corresponding employment growth within the District would inevitably lead to a substantial increase in vehicle movements, worsening congestion, air quality, and carbon emissions.

Environmental and Spatial Constraints

The District is subject to extensive environmental and policy constraints, including Green Belt designation, proximity to the Peak District National Park, conservation areas, and sites of international and national ecological importance.

These constraints significantly limit the locations available for housing, employment land, traveller provision, and biodiversity enhancement. The proposed scale of housing growth risks placing undue pressure on constrained and sensitive environments.

Housing Land Supply and Deliverability

The Council's 2023/24 Authority Monitoring Report identifies over 4,300 dwellings as existing commitments that remain undelivered. In addition, the Five-Year Housing Land Supply documents confirm that North East Derbyshire has significantly over-delivered housing since 2019, with a substantial pipeline of consented sites extending well beyond five years.

Given this context, the Town Council considers that there is no clear evidence-based justification for a housing target of 12,000 dwellings, particularly when existing commitments and historic delivery rates are taken into account.

Conclusion

Taken together, evidence relating to infrastructure capacity, population growth, delivery rates, environmental constraints, commuting patterns, and existing land supply strongly suggests that the proposed housing target is not justified, not proportionate to need, and unlikely to be effectively delivered. The Town Council therefore urges the District Council to review and reduce the proposed housing requirement to a level that is realistic, evidence-led, and responsive to local circumstances.

Proposed Approach to the Location of Development

While the Town Council acknowledges that the proposed spatial strategy has been informed in part by representations received during earlier stages of consultation, it is important that the designation of Dronfield as a Priority 1 location for growth is considered in the context of the town's significant physical, environmental, and heritage constraints. These constraints raise concerns regarding both the capacity of Dronfield to accommodate large-scale development and the appropriateness of several of the proposed site allocations.

Location and Accessibility of Proposed Sites

Several of the proposed housing sites are located on the outer edges of the parish, resulting in reduced accessibility to key services and facilities. Several sites are situated in excess of 2 kilometres from key destinations such as the railway station, secondary school provision, and town centre facilities. This spatial pattern of development risks increasing reliance on private car travel and is inconsistent with the objective of promoting sustainable, walkable communities with convenient access to services, public transport, and employment.

Heritage and Conservation Constraints

Significant areas within Coal Aston, Dronfield, and Dronfield Woodhouse are covered by Conservation Area designations, which place constraints on the scale, layout, and form of development that can be accommodated. In addition, Dronfield has a rich and sensitive historic environment.

The Dronfield Neighbourhood Plan identifies 42 statutory listed buildings, alongside 54 locally listed or character buildings and structures, all of which make a substantial contribution to the town's distinctive character, townscape, and sense of place. Several of the proposed development sites are in close proximity to these heritage assets, and any development would need to preserve and enhance their setting, significantly limiting development potential and increasing complexity.

Topography and Physical Constraints

Dronfield's undulating and steep topography presents notable challenges in terms of site access, engineering works, construction viability, drainage, and visual impact. Varied land levels make the integration of new development into the existing urban fabric particularly difficult, increasing the risk of visually intrusive layouts and poorly connected neighbourhoods if development is not carefully constrained.

Green Belt and Environmental Considerations

Many of the proposed sites either lie within the Green Belt or are located close to sensitive environmental assets. Of particular concern is the proximity of some sites to the Moss Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which places clear limitations on the scale, intensity, and form of development considered appropriate.

The River Drone corridor runs through the town, and several proposed sites are subject to surface water and flood risk, which may be exacerbated by new development if not adequately addressed. Furthermore, Dronfield's historic coal mining legacy means that a number of proposed sites fall within Coal Authority Development High Risk Areas, introducing additional technical, safety, and viability constraints that must be carefully managed.

Conclusion

Taken together, the combined effects of limited accessibility, heritage sensitivity, challenging topography, Green Belt designation, environmental constraints, flood risk, and former mining activity significantly restrict the capacity of Dronfield to accommodate high levels of growth. While the Town Council recognises Dronfield's role within the settlement hierarchy, it is essential that these constraints are fully reflected in the spatial strategy and that development levels are proportionate, sustainable, and sensitive to the town's unique character and limitations.

The Town Council therefore urges the District Council to reconsider the scale and distribution of growth proposed for Dronfield and to ensure that any site allocations are supported by robust, site-specific evidence demonstrating deliverability, sustainability, and alignment with both national and local planning policy.

Specific Sites

Please find below comments from the Town Council for consideration on each of the proposed sites within and around the parish of Dronfield.

Site 45129 – Land between Jordanthorpe Parkway and Chesterfield Road South, Jordanthorpe, Sheffield

This site has the potential to result in direct and cumulative impacts on Dronfield and wider North East Derbyshire area. On this basis, the Town Council considers that Site 45129 is unsuitable for development due to the following material planning considerations.

Traffic and Transport Implications

The proposed site is located in close proximity to an already heavily trafficked roundabout on a strategic route between Sheffield and North East Derbyshire. The introduction of a new access junction at this location would raise serious highway safety concerns, particularly given the volume and speed of traffic using this corridor at peak times. Any intensification of use is likely to exacerbate congestion, increase the risk of accidents, and negatively affect the safe and efficient operation of the surrounding road network.

Green Belt, Environmental and Landscape Impacts

The site is located within the Green Belt, which performs an important and strategic function in preventing urban sprawl and maintaining the separation between Sheffield and settlements within North East Derbyshire, including Dronfield. Development of this site would undermine the purposes of Green Belt designation and risk setting a harmful precedent for further erosion of the gap between urban areas.

In addition, the site lies in close proximity to the Moss Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the River Drone, both of which are sensitive environmental assets. Parts of the site fall within Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3 associated with the watercourse along the northern boundary. This raises significant concerns regarding flood risk, surface water management, and the potential for adverse impacts on ecological networks.

The presence of an existing telecommunications substation within the site further constrains development potential and complicates site layout, design, and servicing, reducing the site's suitability and deliverability.

Infrastructure and Public Services

Development of this site would place additional pressure on already overstretched local infrastructure. Local primary and secondary schools within and serving the area are currently oversubscribed, and there is limited evidence that sufficient education capacity exists to accommodate further growth.

Similarly, GP surgeries, dental practices, and other health services are already operating at or close to full capacity. Without clear and secured infrastructure provision, development of this scale would risk exacerbating service shortfalls and negatively affecting existing residents' access to essential services.

Site Capacity and Proposed Density

The Town Council has particular concerns regarding the proposed approximately 200 dwellings on this site. This represents a high density of development relative to the constrained nature of the land, its environmental sensitivities, and surrounding context. Such a density risks resulting in overly intensive development, poor quality place-making, and insufficient mitigation of environmental and infrastructure impacts.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above - including highway safety concerns, Green Belt harm, environmental and flood risk constraints, pressure on infrastructure, and concerns regarding scale and density - the Town Council considers that Site 45129 is not an appropriate or sustainable location for development. The Council therefore strongly objects to its inclusion as a proposed allocation within the Local Plan.

Site 45054 – Land North of Burns Drive and East of Southfield Mount, Dronfield

The Town Council notes that approximately 55% of this site is already allocated for housing within the adopted 2014–2034 Local Plan, having previously been removed from the Green Belt. However, the remaining approximately 45% of the site remains designated as Green Belt, and the Town Council has significant concerns regarding its suitability for further development.

Environmental, Landscape and Design Constraints

The site's challenging topography has already demonstrated significant constraints on its developability. A recent planning application for the site (ref. 23/00932/FL) was

refused at appeal by a Government-appointed Planning Inspector, who identified fundamental technical and design issues arising from the steep gradient and sensitive location of the site.

The Inspector noted that the site, with a gradient of approximately 1:6, presents “technical and design challenges”, particularly given its position at a key “gateway location marking the transition between the built-up area of Dronfield and the adjoining countryside.” The appeal decision further concluded that the proposed design had been driven primarily by highway engineering requirements - notably the need to achieve an adoptable road gradient of 1:12 - rather than a place-based design approach.

As a result, the Inspector found that the proposal would create “a harsh and overly urbanised form of development at the new town edge and boundary with the countryside”, which would be at odds with the prevailing semi-rural character of the area and the more modest scale of surrounding properties.

In summarising the decision, the Inspector concluded that:

- the design would harm the character and appearance of the area at this sensitive edge-of-settlement location, despite part of the site being allocated for housing; and
- the poor design would result in harm to the living conditions of existing residents on Burns Drive and future occupiers, through overlooking and loss of privacy.

This appeal decision clearly demonstrates that the site’s constraints are not theoretical, but have already resulted in a finding of unacceptable harm.

Relationship with the Countryside and Green Belt

The appeal decision places particular emphasis on the importance of the site’s relationship with the adjoining countryside stating that “the land clearly contributes to the openness of green belt.” The Inspector explicitly recognised that development in this location risks creating an overly dominant and intrusive built form at the settlement edge.

Given these findings, the Town Council considers that the remaining Green Belt land performs an important role in protecting the setting of Dronfield, maintaining a clear and defensible boundary between the town and the open countryside. Extending development further into the Green Belt would exacerbate the very harms identified by the Inspector.

Proximity to Waste Water Treatment Works

The site lies within approximately 150 metres of the Waste Water Treatment Works (WwTWs). There are already well-documented odour issues affecting the surrounding area, and the Town Council considers it highly likely that part of the site would fall within

the cordon sanitaire of the WwTWs. This raises further concerns regarding residential amenity, suitability, and long-term acceptability of development.

Site Viability and Green Belt Reclassification

Taking into account the site's steep topography, the constraints imposed by highway design requirements, its sensitive edge-of-settlement location, and its proximity to the WwTWs, the Town Council considers that the site is inherently difficult and potentially unviable to develop in a satisfactory manner.

In light of the appeal decision and the cumulative constraints identified, the Town Council believes there is a strong case for the remaining undeveloped land to be reclassified and returned to the Green Belt, rather than being relied upon to meet future housing needs.

Infrastructure and Public Services

As with other proposed sites in and around Dronfield, development here would place additional pressure on local primary and secondary schools, all of which are already oversubscribed. It would also increase demand on GP surgeries, dental practices, and other health services, which are currently operating at or near capacity. There is no clear evidence that the necessary infrastructure improvements could be delivered in a timely or coordinated manner.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above - including the findings of a recent appeal decision, harm to landscape character and residential amenity, Green Belt impacts, proximity to the WwTWs, and pressure on local infrastructure - the Town Council considers that further development of Site 45054 is unsound and inappropriate. The Council therefore objects to any expansion of development beyond the existing allocation and strongly recommends that the remaining land be retained, or reinstated, as Green Belt.

Site 45160 – Land North of Dronfield Woodhouse

The Town Council considers that Site 45160 is unsuitable for development due to a range of material planning considerations relating to highway safety, Green Belt harm, environmental constraints, infrastructure capacity, and sustainability.

Traffic and Transport Implications

The local road network surrounding the site is already subject to significant pressure, including on-street parking constraints and busy local junctions. Residents report that vehicle movements are particularly problematic at peak times.

Access arrangements are of particular concern. If site access were to be taken solely via Barnes Lane, this would effectively create a large cul-de-sac, limiting permeability and raising highway safety concerns. Such an arrangement would concentrate traffic movements onto a single route that is already constrained, increasing congestion and the potential for conflict between vehicles, pedestrians, and parked cars.

Green Belt, Environmental and Landscape Impacts

The site lies within the Green Belt, which performs a critical role in preventing urban sprawl and maintaining separation between Sheffield and Dronfield. Development of this site would represent a prominent and unacceptable extension into open countryside, materially harming the openness of the Green Belt and weakening a well-defined settlement boundary.

Local residents have raised ongoing concerns regarding surface water flooding, with flooding already occurring in nearby gardens. Any large-scale development risks exacerbating these issues unless significant mitigation measures are introduced, the effectiveness of which is uncertain given local ground conditions.

The site also falls within a Coal Authority Development High Risk Area, with evidence of previous mining activity. This raises additional concerns regarding ground stability, safety, and long-term viability, and would likely necessitate extensive and costly mitigation.

Ecological considerations also apply, including reports of red kites being present in the area, indicating potential sensitivity in respect of biodiversity and habitat protection. In addition, Public Rights of Way cross the site, which would need to be carefully accommodated. This further constrains the developable area and risks harm to public amenity and landscape character.

Infrastructure and Public Services

Development of this site would place additional strain on local infrastructure, particularly primary and secondary schools, all of which are already oversubscribed. Capacity pressures extend beyond education to GP surgeries, dental practices, and other healthcare services, many of which are currently operating at or near maximum capacity.

The site is located over 2 kilometres from the nearest secondary school, making walking or cycling less practical for many pupils. This is likely to increase reliance on private vehicles, contributing to additional traffic, congestion, and on-street parking pressures elsewhere within the town.

Residents have also reported water pressure issues within the area. Further development would intensify demand on an already constrained utility network, with

the potential to worsen existing problems unless significant infrastructure upgrades are delivered.

Site Suitability and Sustainability

Taking into account highway constraints, Green Belt harm, flood risk, mining legacy issues, ecological sensitivity, infrastructure capacity limitations, and poor accessibility to key services, the Town Council does not consider this site to be suitable or sustainable for development. The cumulative impact of these constraints significantly limits the site's capacity to accommodate development in a manner consistent with sustainable development principles.

Economic and Employment Considerations

Dronfield functions predominantly as a commuter settlement, with a large proportion of residents travelling to Sheffield, Chesterfield, and other surrounding centres for work. Development at this peripheral location would do little to reduce out-commuting and would be likely to increase car-based travel, contrary to wider objectives relating to sustainable transport and carbon reduction.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above - including unacceptable Green Belt harm, highway safety and access concerns, flood risk, coal mining constraints, ecological and rights-of-way impacts, infrastructure capacity issues, and poor sustainability credentials - the Town Council strongly objects to the allocation of Site 45160 for development. The Council considers that the site should be removed from further consideration and retained as Green Belt land.

Site 45218 – Land at Stubley Lane, Stubley Hollow, Dronfield

The Town Council acknowledges that this site is already allocated for housing within the adopted 2014–2034 Local Plan. However, the Council continues to have significant concerns regarding the suitability, deliverability, and sustainability of development at this location.

Highway Safety and Access Constraints

Access to the site is gained via Stubley Lane, which is characterised by a narrow carriageway, limited pavement width, and restricted visibility. These constraints raise serious concerns regarding highway safety, particularly for pedestrians, cyclists, and existing residents.

The limited width of both the road and footways makes it difficult to accommodate increased vehicle movements safely, including construction traffic and additional

residential traffic once the site is developed. The constrained access arrangements raise concerns regarding the safe interaction between vehicles and pedestrians.

Topography and Site Constraints

The site's steep and challenging topography presents further constraints, making it difficult to design a form of development that integrates successfully with the surrounding built environment. Steep gradients increase costs and complexity associated with construction, drainage, and servicing, and raise questions about long-term viability and build quality.

These constraints limit the scope for high-quality, landscape-led design and increase the risk that development would be driven by engineering solutions rather than a place-based approach.

Infrastructure Delivery and Build-Out Rates

The Town Council is particularly concerned about the likely rate of housing delivery on this site. Based on its scale, location, and constraints, it is anticipated that development would proceed at a slow build-out rate of approximately two to three dwellings per year. As a result, the site could remain under construction for a prolonged period, potentially many years, leading to extended disruption for nearby residents and ongoing adverse impacts on local amenity.

Given this anticipated delivery rate, it is essential that all necessary infrastructure and access works are delivered upfront, rather than incrementally. The Town Council has concerns that without clear phasing and enforcement mechanisms, infrastructure provision may lag behind development, compounding highway safety and amenity issues.

Conclusion

While the site is an existing allocation, the Town Council considers that the combination of unsafe and constrained access, narrow roads and pavements, difficult topography, and slow anticipated build-out rates raises serious questions regarding the site's suitability and effectiveness as a housing allocation.

The Council strongly urges the District Council to reconsider the role of this site within the emerging Local Plan and to ensure that any continued allocation is supported by clear evidence demonstrating safe access arrangements, viable site design, and guaranteed early delivery of infrastructure.

Site 45228 – Land at Holmley Common, Dronfield

The Town Council considers that Site 45228 is unsuitable for development due to a number of significant and unresolved material planning constraints, relating to Green Belt harm, flood risk, access and highway deliverability, environmental limitations, heritage considerations, and infrastructure capacity.

Green Belt, Environmental and Landscape Impacts

The site lies wholly within the Green Belt, which performs a vital function in preventing urban sprawl and maintaining the separation between Sheffield and Dronfield.

Development of this site would represent a clear and harmful encroachment into open countryside and would materially undermine the openness and permanence of the Green Belt.

The site is also located within a Coal Authority Development High Risk Area, with a known history of former mining activity. This raises serious concerns regarding ground stability, safety, and long-term viability, and would likely require extensive mitigation measures that further reduce the site's suitability.

The topography and irregular shape of the site present additional constraints, significantly limiting the scope for a coherent and well-designed development. These physical characteristics would make access, layout, and integration with the surrounding area particularly challenging, increasing the likelihood of development being driven by technical solutions rather than a place-based design approach.

Flood Risk and Climate Change Considerations

The site lies within Flood Zone 3a, indicating a high probability of flooding. There is a well-documented history of flooding within the area, supported by long-standing local evidence and historic photographic records.

The site's location immediately downstream of a dam further heightens flood risk, both in terms of potential overflow and long-term resilience. In this context, development would not only place future residents at risk but could also exacerbate flood risk elsewhere within Dronfield.

The Town Council considers that land in this location would be better safeguarded for strategic flood management purposes, including potential future works to widen or adapt the dam and surrounding land to address climate change impacts and increased rainfall events, rather than being released for residential development.

Access and Highway Deliverability

The Town Council is also concerned that there appears to be no clear or viable access strategy for this site. The land is constrained by surrounding uses, topography, floodplain limitations, and environmental designations, and it is not evident how safe,

suitable, and policy-compliant vehicular and pedestrian access could be achieved without significant intervention.

The absence of an obvious access point raises serious questions regarding the deliverability of the site, particularly when considered alongside its Flood Zone 3a classification, Green Belt designation, and proximity to critical flood infrastructure. Any access solution would need to avoid areas at high flood risk, protect ecological assets, and minimise harm to the openness of the countryside, further limiting realistic options.

In the absence of clear, evidence-based proposals demonstrating how the site could be accessed safely and sustainably, the Town Council considers that the site fails a basic test of suitability and effectiveness as required for allocation in a Local Plan. Allocating land without a demonstrable access solution risks promoting a site that is neither achievable nor deliverable within the plan period.

Heritage and Archaeological Considerations

The site lies in close proximity to Nether Birchitt, a pair of Grade II Listed cottages, where development could adversely affect the setting and significance of these heritage assets.

In addition, an archaeological assessment has identified the site as having potential archaeological and historic environment sensitivity. This introduces further uncertainty regarding suitability, deliverability, and the extent to which development could proceed without unacceptable harm.

Infrastructure and Public Services

As with other proposed sites in and around Dronfield, development at Holmley Common would increase pressure on local primary and secondary schools, which are already oversubscribed. It would also add to demand on GP practices, dental surgeries, and other healthcare facilities, many of which are operating at full or near-full capacity.

No clear evidence has been provided to demonstrate that sufficient infrastructure capacity exists, or that appropriate improvements could be delivered in a timely and coordinated manner.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above - including unacceptable Green Belt harm, high flood risk, the absence of an obvious access point, proximity to critical flood infrastructure, coal mining constraints, heritage and archaeological sensitivity, and pressure on already overstretched services - the Town Council strongly objects to the allocation of Site 45228 for development.

The Town Council considers that this site should be removed from further consideration and retained as Green Belt land, with its role prioritised for flood mitigation,

environmental protection, and long-term climate resilience, rather than residential development.

Site 45249 – Land Adjacent to Meadow Grange Care Home, Holmesfield Road, Dronfield Woodhouse

The Town Council supports in principle the allocation of this site for independent housing for older people, linked to the existing Meadow Grange Care Home. The Council recognises the potential benefits of a coordinated older-persons' housing offer and acknowledges that the existing care home building is identified within the Dronfield Neighbourhood Plan as a *character building and structure of local heritage interest* (formerly Dronfield Woodhouse Board School).

Notwithstanding this in-principle support, the Town Council wishes to raise a number of significant concerns which must be addressed if development is to proceed in a safe, sustainable, and acceptable manner.

Highway Safety and Access

The stretch of Holmesfield Road adjacent to the site is constrained by a narrow carriageway and narrow footways, and there have already been multiple recorded traffic accidents in this location. Given the anticipated needs of older residents - including slower reaction times, increased reliance on walking aids, and access by carers and emergency vehicles - highway safety is of particular concern.

The Town Council considers that road widening and pedestrian improvements would be essential to ensure safe access to and from the site. Without such mitigation, the proposed development would pose unacceptable risks to both residents and other road users.

Accessibility and Sustainable Transport

There is a severe lack of local public transport provision serving this location, and the site is relatively isolated from key facilities such as shops, GP surgeries, pharmacies, and the town centre. This lack of accessibility is of particular concern given that future residents would be elderly and potentially less able to drive.

The Town Council is concerned that, without significant improvements to public transport, community transport provision, or local service access, residents may experience reduced independence and increased isolation, contrary to wider objectives for healthy, inclusive, and age-friendly communities.

Green Belt and Settlement Separation

The site lies within a location that contributes to the Green Belt gap between Dronfield and Sheffield. Development here would result in a further erosion of this important separation, weakening a defensible settlement boundary and increasing urban coalescence pressures.

While the Town Council recognises the merits of an older-persons housing scheme in principle, it does not consider that this automatically outweighs Green Belt considerations unless exceptional circumstances are clearly demonstrated and robust mitigation secured.

Conclusion

In summary, the Town Council supports the concept of specialist older-persons housing associated with the existing care home but emphasises that any allocation or development of Site 45249 must be subject to:

- demonstrable highway safety improvements, including road and footway upgrades;
- clear and effective measures to address poor accessibility and transport links; and
- careful consideration of Green Belt impacts and the role this land plays in maintaining separation between Dronfield and Sheffield.

Without clear evidence that these concerns can be satisfactorily resolved, the Town Council considers that development at this location would raise significant sustainability, safety, and policy compliance issues.

Site 45251 – Land off Highgate Lane, Dronfield

The Town Council considers that Site 45251 is unsuitable for development due to a number of significant and unresolved material planning constraints, relating to Green Belt harm, access and highways considerations, accessibility and sustainable transport, drainage, flood risk and infrastructure capacity.

Green Belt Implications and Cumulative Impact

The site would require encroachment into the Green Belt, raising concerns regarding the loss of openness and the erosion of a defensible settlement boundary. Of particular concern is the potential cumulative impact should this site be developed in combination with nearby proposed allocations, notably Site 45054.

The Town Council considers that development of these sites together could lead to a more substantial and visually intrusive extension of the built-up area, which would

materially harm the function and purpose of the Green Belt. This cumulative effect must be fully assessed and carefully weighed as part of any allocation decision.

Access and Highway Considerations

Access to the site is currently achieved via Highgate Lane, which is a narrow, single-track route. The Town Council is concerned that this form of access is unlikely to be suitable to accommodate increased vehicular movements associated with residential development, including construction traffic, refuse vehicles, and emergency access.

Any proposal would therefore need to demonstrate that safe and appropriate access arrangements can be achieved without harmful impacts on road safety or the amenity of existing users of the lane.

Accessibility and Sustainable Transport

The site is located on the outer edge of the parish and is not within convenient walking distance of sustainable transport options, local shops, or key community facilities. As such, future residents are likely to be heavily reliant on private car travel, which conflicts with objectives to promote sustainable patterns of development and reduce car dependency.

Drainage and Flood Risk

The Town Council also notes that drainage issues may be present in this locality. Given wider concerns regarding surface water management elsewhere in Dronfield, any development proposal would need to be supported by robust drainage and flooding evidence demonstrating that development would not increase flood risk on-site or elsewhere.

Infrastructure and Public Services

As with all proposed development sites in and around Dronfield, development at Site 45251 would place additional pressure on local primary and secondary schools, which are already oversubscribed. It would also increase demand for GP surgeries, dental practices, and other healthcare services, many of which are already operating at or near full capacity. The Town Council therefore stresses the importance of ensuring that infrastructure capacity is adequately addressed alongside any development.

Conclusion

In summary, the Town Council objects to the allocation of Site 45251 primarily on the basis of its location within the Green Belt and the resulting harm to Green Belt openness, function, and the integrity of the settlement boundary. The Council does not consider that exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to justify development in this location, particularly when viewed alongside the cumulative impact

of nearby proposed sites. In addition, concerns remain in relation to access arrangements, sustainability of the site's location, drainage, and pressure on local infrastructure. Taken together, these matters indicate that the site is unsuitable for allocation and should not be taken forward within the Local Plan.

Site 45384 – Land at Manor Bungalows, Dronfield

The Town Council is aware that a planning application is currently being prepared for this site and supports its allocation in principle, particularly as a mixed-use or mixed-tenure development that would provide priority for Dronfield residents to downsize. The Council considers that such an approach could make a positive contribution to meeting local housing needs while helping to release larger family homes back into the local housing market.

Notwithstanding this support, the Town Council wishes to highlight several important considerations that must be satisfactorily addressed.

Parking Provision and Local Amenity

The Town Council has concerns regarding the potential loss or reconfiguration of existing parking provision associated with development of the site. Given the density of surrounding development and existing pressures on on-street parking, it is essential that any scheme provides adequate and well-designed parking to serve future residents without displacing parking demand onto surrounding streets or harming residential amenity.

Heritage and Conservation Considerations

The site is located within a Conservation Area and lies in close proximity to a number of statutory listed buildings and character buildings and structures of local heritage interest, as identified in the Dronfield Neighbourhood Plan. These heritage assets make a significant contribution to the character and historic significance of the area.

Any development proposal must therefore demonstrate that it preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and safeguards the setting of nearby heritage assets. Particular attention should be given to building scale, layout, materials, and detailing to ensure a sympathetic response to the historic context.

Design Quality and Local Character

Given the sensitivity of the site, the Town Council considers that high-quality, context-led design will be critical. Development must reflect the established character and grain of the surrounding area, avoiding overdevelopment or forms of design that would appear intrusive or out of keeping with its setting.

Conclusion

In summary, the Town Council supports Site 45384 as a suitable location for a carefully designed mixed development, particularly one that supports and prioritises Dronfield residents. However, this support is conditional upon:

- appropriate mitigation of parking impacts;
- robust protection of heritage assets and the Conservation Area; and
- delivery of a high standard of design that respects and enhances local character.

Subject to these considerations being satisfactorily addressed, the Town Council considers that development of this site could make a positive contribution to Dronfield's housing offer.

Site 45483 – Land off Eckington Road, Coal Aston, Dronfield

The Town Council strongly objects to the allocation of Site 45483 and considers it unsuitable for development. The Council notes that this site was removed from the adopted Local Plan in July 2021 by a Government-appointed Planning Inspector, and no new evidence has been presented to demonstrate that the fundamental constraints identified at that time have materially changed.

Previous Inspector's Decision and Principle of Development

In July 2021, the Planning Inspector explicitly removed this site from the Local Plan on the grounds that development would cause "material harm to openness" of the countryside and would create a "harsh and prominent appearance" at a key gateway location into Coal Aston and Dronfield. The Inspector went on to state "the exceptional circumstances to justify the alteration of the Green Belt boundary to remove the site from Green Belt for housing have not been demonstrated." This conclusion was reached following full examination and remains a significant material consideration.

The Town Council considers that the Inspector's findings remain entirely valid. The site's location, landscape sensitivity, and visual prominence have not altered, and the Council therefore cannot understand how the site could now be considered suitable for allocation when it was previously found to be unacceptable at examination.

Green Belt and Environmental Constraints

The site remains located within the Green Belt, which performs an essential role in preventing settlement coalescence and safeguarding the open countryside at the eastern edge of Coal Aston and Dronfield. Development would again erode openness and long-distance views and weaken a well-defined settlement edge.

Additionally, the site lies in close proximity to the Moss Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), raising concerns regarding potential impacts on sensitive habitats, biodiversity, and ecological connectivity. The combination of Green Belt designation and proximity to nationally important environmental assets strongly weigh against development.

Mining, Utility and Physical Constraints

The Town Council understands that the site is affected by former mining activity, which would require deep and potentially complex foundation solutions, raising concerns regarding viability, safety, and long-term stability.

The site is also constrained by the presence of an electricity supply crossing the land, with mains gas infrastructure located nearby, which further limits the developable area and complicates layout and servicing.

Highway Safety, Access and Sustainability

Access to the site would be taken from Eckington Road, a busy main route with a known issue of speeding traffic and an established accident record. Introducing a new access point at this location raises serious highway safety concerns for both existing road users and future residents.

The site also performs poorly in sustainability terms. Access to local facilities is limited, and public transport provision is sparse, meaning that residents would be heavily reliant on private car travel, contrary to sustainable development principles and transport objectives.

Infrastructure and Water Supply Issues

Local residents have raised ongoing concerns regarding low water pressure in the area, with reports that basic domestic functions cannot be undertaken concurrently (for example, showers and washing machines). Any additional development would place further strain on an already constrained water supply network, exacerbating existing problems.

Conclusion

Given that a Government-appointed Planning Inspector has already determined that development of this site would cause unacceptable landscape and Green Belt harm, the Town Council considers there to be no credible justification for reconsidering this site for allocation.

When taken together - the previous Inspector's findings, Green Belt designation, proximity to an SSSI, mining and utility constraints, highway safety concerns, poor accessibility, and infrastructure limitations - the Town Council concludes that Site 45483 is clearly unsuitable for development. The Council therefore strongly objects to

its inclusion in the emerging Local Plan and considers that it should be permanently excluded from future development consideration.

Site 45671 – Gladys Buxton Adult Education Centre, Oakhill Road, Dronfield

The Town Council notes that full planning permission was granted in March 2025 for the redevelopment of this site to deliver 27 dwellings along with a sports pavilion. The Council supports the inclusion of this site within the emerging Local Plan, recognising that it represents an allocated and consented site capable of contributing to housing delivery within the plan period.

However, the Town Council wishes to understand why the site has not yet been built out, despite having planning permission. In the context of the Local Plan's housing delivery assumptions, build-out rates, and trajectory, the Council considers it important that the District Council clearly explains:

- whether there are known viability, ownership, infrastructure, or delivery constraints affecting the site; and
- how the site is being treated within the housing land supply and delivery trajectory, given the elapsed time since consent was granted.

Clarification on these matters would assist in ensuring that assumptions around housing delivery are realistic and evidence-led, particularly where consented sites are relied upon to justify overall housing targets.

Site 45438 – Land off Callywhite Lane, Dronfield (Employment Allocation)

The Town Council raises strong objections to the allocation of Site 45438 for employment purposes, based on matters of land ownership, access and highway safety, environmental risk, site constraints, and the nature of employment proposed.

Land Ownership and Site Promotion

The Town Council notes that it is the freehold owner of part of the land comprising Site 45438 and wishes to place on record that it did not give permission for this land to be promoted or included as an employment allocation. The Council is concerned that the site has been taken forward within the Local Plan process without the agreement of all landowners, raising questions regarding deliverability and the robustness of the evidence underpinning the allocation.

Access and Highway Safety

Access to the site from Chesterfield Road is severely constrained and currently relies on a narrow bridge crossing the railway line. This route is wholly unsuitable to accommodate the volume and type of traffic typically associated with employment uses, particularly HGV movements.

The Town Council is also concerned that development would result in increased heavy vehicle traffic using local main roads, rather than the strategic road network and bypass, exacerbating congestion and safety issues.

Access to the existing Callywhite Lane industrial estate is already a matter of significant concern, with only a single route in and out of the estate. This arrangement routinely results in traffic congestion and presents serious risks in the event of an emergency, where access for emergency services could be restricted. Any extension of employment development would further intensify these issues.

Flood Risk and Environmental Constraints

The River Drone runs through the site, introducing an inherent flood risk that must be carefully assessed. Development in this location raises concerns regarding floodplain encroachment, surface water management, and potential downstream impacts.

Councillors are also aware of the site's historic use as a former tip, with uneven ground conditions and hollows across the land. In addition, there is knowledge of previous underground fires having occurred on the site. These factors point to potentially significant contamination, ground stability, and remediation challenges, which raise serious questions regarding site viability, safety, and long-term sustainability.

Nature of Employment and Economic Benefit

The Town Council supports the principle of employment development that provides meaningful job opportunities for local residents and helps reduce commuting. However, the Council is concerned that the proposed extension to the Callywhite Lane employment area is more likely to deliver warehouse or storage-based uses, rather than the type of employment that would genuinely support the local economy or provide a diverse range of skilled jobs.

The Council does not consider that a further expansion of low-employment-density warehousing would bring proportionate economic benefits to Dronfield, particularly when weighed against the significant transport, environmental, and amenity impacts identified.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above - including the lack of landowner consent, inadequate and unsafe access arrangements, flood risk, historic contamination and ground

condition issues, and concerns regarding the limited economic benefit of the likely employment uses - the Town Council considers Site 45438 to be unsuitable for allocation as an employment site.

While the Council remains supportive of appropriately located and well-designed employment development that meets local needs, it strongly objects to the inclusion of this site within the Local Plan and urges the District Council to remove it from the employment land portfolio.