

Family Name	Furnell
Given Name	Tracy
Person ID	1286852
Title	Stakeholder Submission
Type	Web
Family Name	Furnell
Given Name	Tracy
Person ID	1286852
Title	Our Vision
Type	Web
Soundness - Positively prepared?	Unsound
Soundness - Justified?	Unsound
Soundness - Consistent with national policy?	Unsound
Soundness - Effective?	Unsound
Compliance - Legally compliant?	Yes
Compliance - In accordance with the Duty to Cooperate?	Yes
Redacted reasons - Please give us details of why you consider the consultation point not to be legally compliant, is unsound or fails to comply with the duty to co-operate. Please be as precise as possible.	<p>In my view, Rochdale MBC has been legally compliant and in accordance with the Duty to Co-operate, but only just. Attaching leaflets to an obscure fence post that is not in clear view of passers-by can hardly be considered notifying the general public to any forthcoming proposals. Changes of such enormity should have been pointed out in a clear manner and displayed on notice boards in local churches, recreational areas, shops and community centres to name but a few.</p> <p>There was a post on Facebook, however many residents do not have or want Facebook. Some residents have reported receiving letters about the plans, but ALL residents of Smithybridge and Littleborough should have received notification and not just a specific few. It has been surprising how many residents are unaware of the proposals and are under the impression that only the Akzo site is to be developed.</p> <p>I do not believe the Plans relating to GM Allocation 26: Land North of Smithybridge and GM Allocation 28: Roch Valley to be sound, and I will attempt to explain why below:-</p> <p>The Land North of Smithybridge - this site is not justified, not positively prepared and not compliant with National policy.</p> <p>GREENBELT</p> <p>The land is labelled as greenfield and part of the Greenbelt, filled with a multitude of wildlife, providing an essential habitat to many animals and insects. The land is home to bats, badgers, deer and mink. Many birds nest and forage for food on the site, including Lapwings and Birds of Prey. Probably the same Birds of Prey that are protected by Rochdale Council and nest in the Town Hall building.</p> <p>Access to it provides residents with a sense of wellbeing and has been particularly valuable to the community during the Pandemic when mental</p>

health has been a challenge for many. In fact, the importance of green spaces in urban areas was discussed at 1.14 in the Places for Everyone document. Why then take away our essential green spaces? People from far and wide visit Hollingworth Lake, the canals and surrounding fields. The area is very popular with tourists who in turn provide local businesses with a lucrative income. Hollingworth Lake has just been listed as one of the best places to visit by Trip Advisor for 2021. A huge commendation for the area and it would be fantastic if Rochdale Council could help promote the area further as a tourist destination. Families visit to walk around the Lake, they use the shops, cafes and bars on Lake Bank. The children feed the birds and then play on the playground at the back of the Lake, after pestering their parents to buy them ice cream from the ice cream van parked nearby. Many walkers visit the area to take in the views and get back to nature, after which they enjoy a meal and a pint at the local restaurants and perhaps stay the night in our B & B's. The area received further publicity when one of our own performed and won a gold medal for rowing at the Olympics in Japan. This can only encourage more youngsters to take up the sport, coached by the very team that enabled a local lad to become a champion. I firmly believe that this is where the future of Littleborough and Smithybridge lies, promoting what is already there in abundance. What is the attraction when all these green spaces have gone and we are left with swathes of housing estates right up to the lake shores?

As a Greenbelt site, the land is offered some protection and should only be released for development if there is no other choice. There is no housing need that cannot be fulfilled using brownfield sites in and around Rochdale. It has been made apparent that all but 56 houses in the Council's housing forecast could be developed using brownfield sites and the redevelopment of run-down empty properties, of which Rochdale has many. If the Council were to adjust its plans to 100% of the housing forecast as opposed to 122%, then I am sure there would be more than enough brownfield land available. Brownfield sites tend to already have good access routes, drainage and power, reducing costs for potential developers. Building high density, affordable housing on such sites has surely got to be a win-win situation.

We have not yet seen the full implications of the Pandemic. Potentially many office spaces and commercial buildings will become empty as more and more people work from home or businesses sadly fail. These spaces, given some imaginative re-development, could make excellent homes, all close to town centre amenities, rail networks and bus routes.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that Greenbelt serves to check the restricted sprawl of large built-up areas and to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another. In this instance the land North of Smithybridge provides a green corridor between Smithybridge and Littleborough, protecting Smithybridge's status as a village and also Littleborough's historic town status. Without it, we would be left with a sprawl of housing estates. In fact, if all the developments were to go ahead, there would be no land left to distinguish any of the areas of Milnrow, Newhey, Smithybridge, Wardle and Littleborough. Once gone, they can never be replaced.

TRAFFIC

The information regarding traffic used to support the proposal is historic and any data held cannot be relevant to transport issues today, therefore this information is unsound. It is neither positively prepared nor effective and cannot be consistent with national policy.

Traffic on Hollingworth Road is always busy with stationary traffic being the norm. However, congestion is made worse when all too frequent issues on the M62 Motorway force traffic off at Rochdale and Milnrow's junctions. This causes widespread gridlock around Rochdale, Smithybridge and Littleborough's A58. Winter is particularly challenging in this regard. The

resultant high levels of pollution create a smog around Littleborough that can be seen from the hills above Blackstone Edge.

An additional 510 houses on the site could mean over 1100 more cars thus exacerbating levels of pollution in the area. The GMCA has admitted that 152 roads across the region are in danger of being close to or exceeding the legal limits for Nitrogen Dioxide .

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The bus service that is currently in place is infrequent, particularly after peak times and can also be expensive. This does not encourage people to leave their cars at home and use public transport. To accommodate additional houses/bus users the current bus service would have to improve dramatically to be more frequent and cost-effective.

The train station is within walking distance of the proposed site and provides a reasonable service taking commuters from Littleborough to Manchester or to Leeds. However, from personal experience, I can advise that the service (pre-pandemic) was hit and miss, to say the least. Frequent delays and train cancellations meant people returning home to take their cars to work. Those that persevered with the train were fortunate if they got a seat and anybody getting on the train to Manchester after the Rochdale station would be lucky to get on at all. Too few carriages caused chaos at every point down the line causing people to be frequently late for work.

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There is a tram service at Milnrow, unfortunately there are no means of getting to Milnrow unless you are prepared to walk the 2.5 miles to get there. With the current limitations of public transport, I feel this makes the transport proposals unsound.

HEALTH SERVICES

Our health services are already over-stretched and struggling to cope with demand.

The waiting time for an appointment at a GP's surgery can be 7-10 days. With potentially thousands more residents and no promise of extra doctors surgeries, the health system is being set up to fail, putting the lives of many people in jeopardy. During the pandemic, most GP surgeries have had to rely on telephone consultations and there is a possibility that this system may continue post-pandemic. It was recently announced on the local news that at least 5 people have died as a result of not being able to get in to see a GP in person and the coroner expects this number to rise. Bearing in mind that in addition to the proposed houses on the Greenbelt, there are plans afoot for high-density housing to be built in and around Littleborough on brownfield sites, this ultimately equates to huge numbers of residents who

will need to register with a local GP. What plans do the Council have to accommodate this? As far as I can see, the Council has a policy of build first and worry about the infrastructure later, if not at all.

Rochdale used to have an A & E Department and also a Maternity Unit which catered for the area.

The A & E Department was downgraded some years ago to an Urgent Care Centre that struggles to cope with the number of people attending and is unable to offer treatment for severe/complex cases. I know this from personal experience. People requiring such treatment have to go to Oldham or North Manchester General Hospital which entails a lengthy and stressful journey time.

Maternity care is now provided at North Manchester General (NMGH) or Oldham. Unfortunately, Rochdale and Bury have lost their Maternity provision, meaning all women have to travel quite some distance on very busy, congested roads to seek safe delivery of their babies. Once at the hospital of choice, parking is impossible causing a great deal of stress and anxiety. Many women choose to go out of the area completely and use Calderdale's services instead.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is very real and something we all need to address NOW. Rochdale Council say all the right things but so far very little has been done to make Rochdale a cleaner, greener place. Rochdale's Climate Change Chief admitted this in a recent interview published by the Rochdale Observer dated 29th September 2021.

Flooding and excessive rain is a direct result of climate change. Building on all our green spaces is leading to devastating consequences for homeowners around the borough and indeed the country. The floods of 2015 were not an isolated incident and we have seen flooding every year since, leading to misery for people left to mop up the damage caused to their homes and businesses. Many people without appropriate house and contents insurance are still struggling with the repairs today. Others may have insurance but incur inflated insurance premiums due to the frequency and extent of the flood damage.

The land north of Smithybridge acts as a huge sponge, soaking up the rainwater. Concrete provides no such benefits and any water would be more likely to run off downhill, affecting existing houses adjacent to the site and causing overspill to the canal and river with dire consequences downstream.

What does the Council or Developer propose with regard to flood mitigation? Any such work would probably cost millions to implement without any guarantee of success.

COP 26, also being heralded as the Last Chance to Save the Planet is to be held in November 2021. I believe any further plans to build on Greenbelt will look very different following this meeting if we are to save our planet and ensure the safety of future generations.

CONTAMINATION

The land north of Smithybridge is bordered by the brownfield site that was the home to the former Akso Chemicals. It has been revealed on a very recent report that there are still very high levels of Asbestos on this brownfield site, despite previous attempts to clean the land. It is proposed that a further 169 houses be built on the Akso site following a very laborious and expensive cleaning up exercise. There is a concern that the Greenfield land may well already be contaminated to a degree from the dust and chemicals that seeped into the land and into the air itself. By building homes on these sites, are the Council subjecting unwitting homeowners to the possibility of serious and possibly deadly health issues in the future and in turn, costly litigation for the Council and Developer?

JP ALLOCATION 28 □ ROCH VALLEY

This is land off Smithybridge Road, Hurstead, Rochdale which is designated Protected Open Land. The land is currently empty but a short time ago was used as pasture land for cows and sheep. There is a public right of way where people walk from Smithybridge Road, through the fields and past the farmhouse, ending at the end of Old Road.

To the right of the field off Smithybridge Road is the entrance to a mine shaft which has since been filled in and covered over with soil. To the left lies a sink hole, which took United Utilities 18 months to fill and make safe. The land is known to be unstable in this area.

SPRAWL

Although no longer used for farmland, the site is still home to many animals, birds and insects and it also provides an essential green corridor separating existing housing developments on South View Terrace and the houses on Eafield Road and Yea Fold. There are more housing estates built off the A58 Rochdale to Littleborough, namely the houses off Stott Street, William Street, Hurstead and a larger development at Smallbridge which include Tarnside Close, Carrington Close etc. The land in question runs behind these developments.

There is a proposal for 510 houses on the land and a road allowing access from one end of the site to the other. Houses built here would have the effect of merging all the housing estates to create a huge sprawl from Rochdale to Smithybridge, thus taking away Smithybridge's status as a village.

TRAFFIC

510 houses may mean at least a further 1000 cars on the road, many of which trying to exit the estate via Smithybridge Road.

Smithybridge Road is already extremely busy, with cars queueing at the traffic lights from the top of the hill (the junction from the A58 Halifax Road and Smithybridge Road), down to Cleland McIver at the bottom. It can take 15 minutes just to get through the traffic lights with the resultant pollution emitted from stationary cars.

100 yards down the road from the proposed site, there is a railway line (Smithybridge train station) with barriers that close every 30 minutes and cause further queues and stationary traffic. You can add another 10 minutes to your journey while you wait for the barriers to lift.

The daily congestion is frequently made worse following road closures or accidents on the M62 Motorway as cars are re-routed through Milnrow and Wildhouse Lane and from Rochdale via the A58 Halifax Road. The existing roads are in poor condition and unable to cope with additional cars.

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FLOODING

The River Roch runs through the land and when the river floods, the land acts as a flood plain and protects the houses built near it (Yea Fold). At the same time as the field floods, Smithybridge Road also floods on the bridge, covering the road and pavements from edge to edge with deep water. This is not an unusual occurrence. I have lived in and around the area for over 46 years and I know this to be true. Without this land available to act as a sponge, the river could flood at many points downstream and affect the very houses that are proposed, not to mention the existing houses and businesses.

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<p>Redacted modification - Please set out the modification(s) you consider necessary to make this section of the plan legally compliant and sound, in respect of any legal compliance or soundness matters you have identified above.</p>	<p>I believe JP Allocation 26 Land North of Smithybridge and JP Allocation 28 Roch Valley be completely removed from the Places for Everyone Proposal.</p>
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<p>Title</p>	<p>Our Strategic Objectives</p>
<p>Type</p>	<p>Web</p>
<p>Our strategic objectives - Considering the information provided for our strategic objectives, please tick which of these objectives your written comment refers to:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet our housing need 2. Create neighbourhoods of choice 3. Ensure a thriving and productive economy in the districts involved 4. Maximise the potential arising from our national and international assets 5. Reduce inequalities and improve prosperity 7. Ensure that districts involved are more resilient and carbon neutral 8. Improve the quality of our natural environment and access to green spaces 9. Ensure access to physical and social infrastructure