

DEPUTATION THREE – MORLEY AGAINST RECKLESS CONSTRUCTION

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing your colleague.

MR J AVEYARD: Lord Mayor, members of Council, I am Jim Aveyard, my colleague is Peter Barrie. There are other colleagues in the public gallery.

This deputation by members of MARC (Morley Against Reckless Construction) is to raise the issue of imminent over development in the Morley area by the proposed allocation of land for the building of up to 8,000 houses. References to Morley relate to the Borough of Morley that was subsumed by Leeds in 1974. Since then many greenfield sites, in every part of the Borough have been given over to housing developments, some involving many hundreds of properties. There are brownfield sites within Morley that are still not being used to provide affordable housing. Why the clamour for our green fields when areas that need improvement are ignored? Why do we need to build large numbers of houses on our green fields when there are houses already built but not occupied within the city? Why is there no plan to bring these empty homes back into use? Doing that would generate council tax revenue, provide jobs for local tradesmen, generate business for local suppliers and keep money in the Leeds area.

This dash for greenfield development is underpinned by the Local Development Framework (LDF). We believe this to be a flawed document that fails to substantiate the need for all these houses proposed across the city in general and the disproportionate numbers proposed for the Morley area in particular. Figures from the 2011 census show that Leeds did not grow at the rate predicted in the LDF, even though the decade covered by that survey was largely one of boom. The LDF is strangely quiet on where this growth is likely to come from.

Mortgages are difficult to obtain and many buyers struggle to find the deposit needed to make their first purchase. This may well result in half completed estates or half empty estates with all the problems that brings.

Morley struggles to cope with its existing population. Schools are full. If these developments produce just one school age child per household, where does the Council propose to educate a further 8,000 children? Money given by developers cannot create space where no space exists in schools and the money would not cover the cost of a new school. The situation is critical; children are being transported to other parts of the city adding to rush hour congestion. Public transport, particularly from some of the areas proposed for development ranges from poor to non-existent. The railway station is remote and rush hour trains are always full when they arrive at Morley, resulting in passengers having to stand for the journey to Leeds. People with mobility problems are at even greater disadvantage as the station and environs do not cater for their needs.

If each household provides an average of three residents where are the proposed health centres to cope with an additional 24,000 patients? Waiting time for

a GP appointment is already up to three weeks. Where are the proposed Dental Surgeries, where is the provision for care for the elderly and infirm?

If these new homes produce an average of 1.5 cars per household, easily attained on the road where I live, then we can expect a further 12,000 cars on roads that cannot cope with the cars already using them. There are three major north/south roads linking Leeds with Kirklees and Calderdale. All are extremely congested at peak times. There is one major east/west road, the A650, that links Bradford and Wakefield and runs through an area of Morley that has been earmarked for much of the proposed development. This road is congested at the best of times but gridlocks when there are incidents on the adjacent M62. These incidents are not unusual. The Highways Agency is very concerned about the A650 corridor, and with very good reason.

Leeds is not alone in wishing to develop along the A650 corridor. Bradford and Wakefield each have proposals to develop up to the Morley boundary and Kirklees are proposing to develop along the A653, resulting in Leeds and Kirklees becoming a continuous urban area at Woodkirk/Chidswell. Why has there been no consultation between Councils when these plans have been in the development stage? Morley will be the centre of an overdeveloped, under resourced urban sprawl unless this plan is given serious reconsideration.

We also want to know why when a Planning Panel refused permission for two sites were the sites revisited within days by another Planning Panel? It must have been known that a change was imminent. Why the waste of time and public money? We do not believe that the Council has taken any of notice of the objections raised by local people who, unlike developers, pay Council Tax year on year and deserve better treatment from this elected Chamber.

Do Council departments talk to each other or have all the crystal balls fogged up? We suspect the latter as we would otherwise have expected these problems to have been spotted and some attempts made to sort them out. As it is, it would appear to be left to Morley to either sort it or put up with it.

We believe we deserve better from you. Thank you for listening and sorry for the speed of presentation. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, I move that the matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon. Thank you. (*Applause*)