

# **SAVE PARLINGTON ACTION GROUP**

## **Deputation to Full Council**

**11<sup>th</sup> January 2017**

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### **Thank you Lord Mayor for the opportunity to address the chamber**

The SAVE PARLINGTON ACTION GROUP objects to proposals for house building on the historic Parlington Estate.

We are predominantly residents of Aberford, Barwick in Elmet, Potterton, Scholes, Micklefield and other settlements. We don't want Parlington to be destroyed by the building of a new town, which will then destroy our villages.

Our Group's membership is large, growing and active. In just three weeks leading up to 7<sup>th</sup> November 2016 over 2,800 people submitted objection letters in response to the SAP consultation.

I'm sure you agree that the beauty of the villages and settlements around central Leeds is testament to the success of our city ancestors and the success of today's residents. Rural Leeds has previously benefited from successive Council administrations.

The villages on the east side of Leeds have a long history. Evidence of settlement can be traced back to the Iron Age and possibly to the Bronze Age, particularly in Parlington. The fortunes of the villages have waxed and waned but they are still beautiful places in which to live.

The SAVE PARLINGTON ACTION GROUP is not motivated by nostalgia. Our members benefit from walks in the countryside in and around Parlington. We enjoy packed picnic lunches and sitting amid our families and friends with space, air and greenery around us. We appreciate and acknowledge our good fortune. Therefore, we want to protect and preserve Parlington for the future.

Lord Mayor, Leeds residents, and especially East Leeds residents are concerned. We sense that our countryside is disappearing rapidly and with that our lives are poorer.

The amount of countryside that Leeds City Council is targeting for house building is vast and untenable. Swathes of green belt are allocated for building. Yet this Council made a statement, reported in the YEP, that "Only 2.3 per cent of green belt land is allocated for development and the majority of these green belt sites are phased for later delivery in the plan period. The core strategy has earmarked over 52 per cent of housing allocations on previously developed land."

Statistics without context can be misleading. Only small percentages of green belt may be destroyed but if that green belt prevents encroachment, or has heritage, or hosts an irreplaceable habitat then its loss is catastrophic. The clock cannot be turned back. That unique environment is gone forever.

Lord Mayor, members of our group contend that what matters are people's experiences of, and engagement with, the countryside.

Statistics should not be quoted just in hectares. The benefits of access to green, open spaces must be quantified too. Statistics should include people's experiences too.

It matters that access to, and experience of, the countryside is going to be destroyed. People matter - every day.

Lord Mayor, development can destroy the sense of rurality. As Nicholas Schoon wrote in CPRE's [Building on Barker](#): "As an area becomes increasingly built up, it looks, sounds, feels and smells less

and less like countryside. It becomes harder and harder for people – most of them living in towns and cities – to ‘get away from it all’ because traffic and built development are closer and closer at hand. An area can no longer be perceived long before half of its surface is covered by development.”

An alternative way of looking at the loss of countryside can be found in the [2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Small Area Geographies](#). This obscure Office of National Statistics report, unearthed by Sunday Times journalist [Jonathan Leake](#), shows that more than 1300 villages in England and Wales (mostly in southern England) disappeared in the first decade of this century – from AD 2000 to December 2016.

Lord Mayor that is a shocking statistic!

According to the report, the declassification of a village “usually occurred where a town or city’s fringe expanded. Rarely did it result from ‘organic growth’ of a village.”

We know villages are under greater pressure now than ever before. There will have been no let-up in the rate of loss since 2011. The loss of more than 1,300 villages should act as a wake-up call for Leeds City Council. You in this chamber know how many more of its villages will cease to be villages unless you take steps to plan Leeds’s growth better. You must act to allow building projects to be undertaken in a much more sustainable way.

As a point of reference places like Swarcliffe and Stanks now part of the urban fringe, were formerly farming villages on the edge of the original Parlington Estate.

Inorganic growth is an outcome of poor planning and panic responses to a growth continuum that hasn’t been dealt with. It is a symptom of bad management by the authorities. You are the ones we trust to overcome such problems and create positive solutions which lead to organic growth.

The destruction of the green belt does not have to occur, especially as there is so much brownfield land available. Building on brownfield land is the only route that Leeds City Council should take.

CPRE figures show this (repeat the figures for Leeds).

Pilot brownfield registers								
Council	Region	Number of sites	Total area (ha)	Housing capacity	NLUD housing capacity	Change in capacity	% change	Year’s supply
Leeds	Yorks	342	790	30,026	15,457	14,569	94	6.86

The feeling of loss is always acute when the loss of Strategic Green Infrastructure occurs, and the **Urbanisation** of the unique rural landscape takes place. It’s a contradiction to say that a village can be built in a green space and it will retain the green space.

If a space is built on, then it’s an urban space – anything else is a fudge.

The Green belt serves many purposes - to build on the LUNGS of OUR VILLAGES is to condemn our villages to a slow painful death.

Building on Green Belt, notwithstanding the above, leads to detrimental:

- Encroachment on historic villages and towns and the potential for future coalescence;
- Degradations to our rural lifestyle and mental well-being of residents

- Lack of Sustainability Highways, Transport and employment opportunities
- Loss of Heritage assets

Lord Mayor, members of the Save Parlington Action Group are aware that any building on green belt must be made only in “exceptional circumstances”.

The term “exceptional circumstances” is used in the Leeds Core Strategy document on 10 occasions yet there is no guidance on what exceptional circumstances means.

We therefore request a deputation between representatives of the SAVE PARLINGTON ACTION GROUP and the Council so that the Council can do the following:

1. List and explain specifically what the term “exceptional” circumstances covers;
2. Identify clearly circumstances which are ‘exceptional’;
3. Explain why, when Protected Areas of Search and brownfield sites exist throughout the city, Officers and Councillors believe there is a circumstance “exceptional” enough to warrant taking the exceptionally “special landscape” at Parlington out of the Green Belt and allocating it for house building.

Furthermore if you conclude Green belt has to be lost we challenge the administrations’ reports to find less special pieces of land to destroy. Perhaps one more fitting to the settlement hierarchy in the outer north east such as extensive green belt around Wetherby.

Thank you – we look forward to the deputation.

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