

I speak today on behalf of dedicated citizens of Leeds who are passionate about the City's green spaces and have been attempting to persuade the Council's planning department to operate in a democratic manner by implementing its own green policies when making planning decisions. Currently there is a clear imbalance between citizens and developers.

In a five minute slot it is difficult to outline the many examples of poor practice which we have observed, so I will focus on lack of policy implementation - given further time there would be so much more to be said.

- The Council's statement of community involvement in the planning process emphasises the importance of public participation. Yet our experience is of a one sided process where at planning panels the developer is given priority, objectors being limited to a one minute presentation and many hundreds of objection comments are briefly summarised with key issues being ignored. In addition mitigation outlined in S106 agreements are sidelined and ignored as is the case for Green Park in East Leeds where the peaceful Country Park promised is now to have instead 3G floodlit pitches operating 7 days a week from 8am to 10pm.
- Public participation is also limited by the approval of applications with many issues outstanding – again this is the case for Green Park where there are currently 37 conditions attached to the approval meaning that key issues are no longer available for comment by the public.
- The Parks and Green Spaces Strategy states: *Parks and green spaces are also great for the environment - they provide homes for wildlife, mitigate the impacts of climate change and can help clean the air.* In spite of this, plans have recently been passed which replace green spaces rich in wildlife with plastic football pitches which are laid on toxic rubber crumb from used tyres (classified as a microplastic.) This also directly flouts many aspects of the Council's Core Strategy which contains key statements on preservation and enhancement of green spaces, preservation of biodiversity, climate change etc. Of even more concern is the fact that Councillors were not made aware of this at planning panels, in spite of these issues being listed as part of an objection on the planning portal.
- The Age Friendly Leeds Strategy states that it will engage with older people (1 in 3 of the City's population) on the development and evaluation of projects which affect them. 3G floodlit pitches operating 7 days per week which replace quiet, precious green spaces were objected to by many older residents, but their voice was ignored.
- The Leeds Waste Strategy states that Leeds aims to be net carbon zero by 2030 . It commits to:
 - reducing waste
 - stopping using so much plastic,
 - with the ultimate aim of becoming a world leader in eliminating unnecessary waste and its environmental impact.

Yet at a recent planning meeting impact of waste from 3G pitches was ignored on the basis that once the Council had legally removed it it was no longer their responsibility. This is not the action of a world leader or legally responsible organisation as defined by Duty of Care.

- The Leeds plan to tackle climate change includes the following:
 - reduce our own carbon footprint
 - promote a less wasteful, low carbon economy,
 - build sustainable infrastructure.

Again plastic 3G pitches fail all of these. In addition the plan further commits to carbon neutrality and planting more woodland Yet plans recently passed ie plastic 3G pitches instead of grass involve the removal of veteran trees and hedgerows both actions reduce carbon storage and the former increases carbon in the environment.

- The local plan update states: *The District's environmental resources are crucial, not just in ensuring quality of life, but also sustaining life itself.* . How does the building of plastic 3G pitches on beautiful, species rich spaces achieve this? It further states: *The protection and enhancement of the natural environment is fundamental to the Council's climate change mitigation ambitions.* Recent planning decisions have ignored these strictures in favour of the economic imperative of seed funding from the Football Foundation, whilst ignoring the fact that alternative brownfield sites are available.
- Formal complaints about these issues are currently unanswered.
- Due to the limited time allowed it is difficult to raise the systematic failings of the City Development Team and Planning Officers lack of impartiality, political neutrality and as they claim a fairness and respect to local residents comments and concerns.

We want to work with the Council for the fairer, greener future promised to us by Labour. We see considerable systemic failings relating to the planning process. We therefore call upon LCC to hold an open (but tightly structured) process for people from across the city, to share their stories about planning in this city with the aim of making Leeds the best, most transparent, and most collaborative local planning authority in the Country.

