Response to ED/58 distribution of housing growth

1. Our comments regarding changes to Policy CS6 and to dealing with backlog are set out in our response to ED/31, RMA/02 and ED/33. The comments below address the proposed levels of growth at Bramley, Wickersley and Ravenfield Common and Swinton/Kilnhurst. Overall the Council does not support the amended proportions of growth identified. Apart from reference to the Rotherham-Maltby quality bus corridor no strong supporting evidence for this significant change is given. No evidence at all seems to be given for amending the growth target for Swinton.

2. The hierarchy and settlement strategy has been based on a borough-wide consideration of the suitability and ability of settlements to support growth and change, driven by wider sustainability objectives rather than by the interests of particular land owners / developers (LEB/10a, LEB/10b, LEB/11a, LEB/11b, CSP/9, CSP/29a, and CSP/29b). CSP/14 Fact Sheet 1 (June 2011) provides a brief summary of how have we decided where new development should go.

3. This has been further refined by parallel working on the draft Sites & Policies DPD (CSP/13, CSP/44 and CSP/44b), Strategic Green Belt Review (LEB/16) and Transport Impact Report (KSD/8a and KSD/8b) to establish the most appropriate site allocations to deliver the Core Strategy.

4. The Core Strategy and Sites & Policies documents have been subject to ongoing and iterative Sustainability Appraisal, culminating in the Integrated Impact Assessment accompanying the Submission Core Strategy (RSD/3a and RSD/3b). The Council considers this to be sound justification for the growth distribution as set out in the Core Strategy.

Bramley, Wickersley and Ravenfield Common

5. The Council does not support the proposed further growth at Bramley, Wickersley and Ravenfield Common. As set out in our previous response to this issue, and as outlined in the hearing sessions, the Council does not consider that the settlement forms part of the Rotherham urban area; it is a stand-alone grouping (reflecting local travel to work patterns) distinct from the Rotherham urban area (being separated by a strategic Green Belt gap) but well connected to it.

6. Whilst the settlement grouping provides a good range of services and facilities within a popular residential area, services are dispersed between the district centre at Wickersley, the local centre at Bramley and facilities off Moorhead Way close to Junction 1 of the M18 (paragraph 5.2.20 of the Core Strategy refers). There is concern that significant new growth will place additional pressure on the local road network.

7. The South Yorkshire Settlement Study Phase 2 (LEB/11a) notes:

“7.22 Bramley/Wickersley/Ravenfield Common (population 21,309) is a medium sized settlement supporting a range of services that meet local needs. The settlement has two separate town centres, a retail park, an excellent bus service and easy access to the strategic road network. Overall, Bramley/Wickersley/Ravenfield Common is self sufficient but its potential to perform a wider role is limited by its proximity to the Rotherham Urban Area. The settlement capital score of 33 indicates that it has a high to medium order function.”
**Swinton / Kilnhurst**

8. The Council does not support the additional growth proposed at Swinton / Kilnhurst. The South Yorkshire Settlements Study (LEB/10a) at paragraph 3.96 notes:

“The ability of Swinton/Kilnhurst to serve a wider catchment area is limited by the number of settlements of comparable size and character in proximity (Wath-upon-Dearne, Rawmarsh/Parkgate and Mexborough). However, it is important to note that Swinton offers public transport links to a wider area than some of the neighbouring settlements (other than Mexborough and Bolton-on-Dearne). Overall, potential growth is unlikely to lead to an improved service role for a settlement, but may help it to remain self-sufficient and support the viability and range of existing services in the town.”

9. The Settlement Capacity Report 2009 (CSP/29a), appendix 17 – pages 8 and 9 provide a summary including:

“The findings of initial survey work looking at the potential growth capacity of possible site allocations indicates that Swinton/Kilnhurst is unlikely to achieve the status of ‘High Potential for Change’ as identified in the Rotherham Core Strategy Preferred Option January 2007. The only way to realise this status is through expansion to the south and north and this would result in the removal of the strategic gap between Swinton and Rawmarsh and Swinton and Wath upon Dearne. Expansion to the east is severely constrained by the railway line, the canal, and the high probability of this land flooding.”