Local Development Framework
Shaping your community for the next 15 years

June 2011

Fact Sheet Number 4

Why do we need to build on land at Bassingthorpe Farm?

Introduction
Following on from previous consultation it remains the case that development of land at Bassingthorpe Farm is considered essential for Rotherham’s growth strategy and for delivering sustainable development. This fact sheet explains the reasons why development of the land currently within the Green Belt at Bassingthorpe Farm is considered necessary. Not all of the land would be required; a green wedge would be maintained for the purposes of avoiding the joining together of settlements, maintaining recreation / amenity space and access to the countryside, and biodiversity.

Overall Strategy
The overall strategy for development in Rotherham over the next 15 years has come together following a number of consultations from 2005/6 onwards. Taking account of comments and feedback from previous consultations on the Core Strategy, our strategy for Rotherham is for development in the main urban area, in principal settlements and public transport corridors. You can find more information on this process in Fact Sheet Number 1.

Since our last consultation we are now proposing a local housing target of 12,750 new homes (from 2012 to 2027) and an employment land requirement of 235 hectares. These represent a reduction of 27% and 30% respectively on the targets we previously consulted on in 2009.

Housing need in Rotherham’s urban area
National population and household projections show an increasing need for houses in Rotherham. Communities require new housing in order to account for ongoing trends such as an ageing population, greater number of people living in single person households, and to ensure that there are opportunities within local communities for young people, families and others to buy or rent houses.

Growth is essential to the lifeblood of Rotherham. Without growth Rotherham will stagnate and be left behind other areas. We will be unable to address the issues above or provide the necessary community services and facilities essential to support an improving quality of life for Rotherham’s residents. There will be increasing deprivation in the Borough as fewer and fewer employment opportunities become available.
We have looked at the population and household projections for Rotherham and looked at what this would mean for each settlement if the rate of growth was spread evenly across all settlements. In this case Rotherham urban area would need 5,415 new homes over the Plan period (2012 to 2027).

**Why do we need more development in the urban area?**

**Sustainability**

Our strategy for development, which has been developed through previous consultation, expects more development to take place in the urban area which is a sustainable location close to existing infrastructure and facilities. This approach has been supported by previous sustainability appraisal of our Core Strategy. As part of producing our Draft Core Strategy independent consultants have prepared an Integrated Impact Assessment, which looks at our plan’s sustainability as well as health and equality issues.

This assessment supported the approach taken to the main urban area. It concluded that: Of the settlements in the borough, Rotherham Town is clearly the most ‘sustainable’ choice as the main location for growth and this was recognised in the RSS and the South Yorkshire settlement work. There are no major constraints to Bassingthorpe Farm which is in very close proximity to the town centre, and there is much potential to improve sustainability performance (e.g. town centre vitality, percentage of public transport use, accessibility to key facilities and services, associated schemes to improve the Public Right of Way network, etc.).

**Availability of sites for development**

We have refined the settlement hierarchy and growth strategy by looking at Rotherham’s settlement groupings taking into account population data including working age population, numbers of economically active people, number of jobs available within settlement groupings, and travel to work data. It also factored in transport accessibility, facilities available within settlements and our previous work to classify settlements’ ability to accommodate growth and change.

Settlements were ranked and then an ‘ideal’ distribution of housing (and to a lesser extent employment) based on need was calculated. This indicated that Rotherham urban area should ideally accommodate 49% of new development. The distribution put forward in the Draft Core Strategy is for Rotherham urban area to accommodate 4,850 homes, or 38% of the proposed housing requirement of 12,750. This is 11% short of the ‘ideal’ distribution. Bassingthorpe Farm would account for 19% of this requirement (2,400 homes).

We have looked at all sites we think are suitable for housing in the main urban area, and then identified which of these are ‘preferred’ for development (ie those in the most sustainable locations):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of homes on sites considered suitable for housing</th>
<th>5525</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of homes on ’preferred’ sites</td>
<td>2428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of homes on ‘non-preferred’ sites</td>
<td>3097</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This makes it clear that in order to meet the growth strategy then both preferred and non-preferred sites will need to be developed. If Bassingthorpe Farm is not pursued then alternative sites for a significant number of dwellings would need to be found in other locations in the urban area. If this is not achieved then the urban area would not be the
main location for new growth, and larger numbers of homes would need to be provided in the Borough’s smaller settlements, contrary to the overall strategy.

**Lack of previously developed land**
The strategy adopted in our current Development Plan targeted previously developed land, particularly for new employment land. Sites such as former collieries presented important development opportunities, and overall this approach has been successful. In preparing our latest Development Plan we have surveyed 700 sites within Rotherham to identify capacity within settlements for new development and to consider how suitable these sites are for different types of uses. We know that there are no longer many large previously developed sites available.

If we look at all the sites we have surveyed and identified as suitable for housing across Rotherham, it is clear that although we have capacity to meet the target of 12,750 homes, we have limited numbers of brownfield sites:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of site</th>
<th>Number of homes which could be developed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brownfield (i.e. previously developed)</td>
<td>5,351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenfield (including Green Belt sites)</td>
<td>20,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed brownfield / greenfield</td>
<td>1,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>26,673</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that in order to meet our housing target then land within the Green Belt will be required.

**Other benefits of development at Bassingthorpe Farm**
The sustainability appraisal referred to above indicates a number of the benefits of developing some of the land at Bassingthorpe Farm. The key benefits are highlighted below:

- **Central location** – planning policy encourages development which creates sustainable communities. Bassingthorpe Farm is centrally located within the borough, close to the town centre and the heart of the main urban area.

- **Regeneration of town centre** – because of its location it is well placed to help with the regeneration of Rotherham town centre, which is a key priority for the Council and its partners. One of the 10 Town Team goals is to increase the number of people living within the town centre in order to help improve the viability of existing businesses and widen the range of facilities available. Development at Bassingthorpe Farm has potential to help contribute towards these aspirations by delivering an increase in population close to the town centre. There is a greater potential that these people will use the services and facilities, helping secure existing business and encourage the creation of new enterprises, benefiting all of those who visit the town centre.

- **Benefits of growth/investment for existing communities** – it is not proposed that all of the land at Bassingthorpe Farm is developed; land for green space and green corridors will be retained. A more appropriate approach to development would be to ‘build out’ from existing communities. Development which builds on existing communities and infrastructure is inherently more sustainable, cost effective and environmentally friendly. Where this takes place the introduction of new homes will have benefits for local services similar to those for the town centre outlined above. It is also clear that new development will require new or improved infrastructure such as community facilities (including new schools or improvements to existing
facilities), highway improvements, children’s play areas and so on. These contributions will be secured through the planning process and will have benefits for all those within the wider community.

- **Best use of existing infrastructure, schools, transport, shops, and health facilities** – there are far greater opportunities for existing facilities to be improved than for the creation of new ones; particularly in the current financial climate. New development at Bassingthorpe Farm will help towards securing the viability of existing facilities and bring benefits in terms of potential improvements.

- **More housing and more affordable housing choices** – the introduction of new homes into Rotherham will help communities by providing new opportunities for people to get on to or move up the housing ladder. This means that young families will have opportunities to find affordable homes and there will be greater potential for people to stay living within their communities rather than moving away to find affordable housing.

- **Tackling deprivation** – the latest research shows that a number of areas within Rotherham continue to experience deprivation. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 shows that areas around Bassingthorpe Farm are part of a concentration of the most deprived parts of Rotherham (see map below). The proposed development can help to address deprivation by improving facilities, improving housing choices and improving employment opportunities.