

Comment

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Comment by 

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Q1. To which document do your comments relate? Wickersley NDP Statement of Consultation

Q2. Do you wish to? Support with conditions

Q3. Please provide your comments below making clear which part of the document you are referring to (specifying relevant paragraphs, tables, figures, boxes or appendices).

This refers to the statement of consultation in general.

Although I was an elected member of Rotherham Borough Council when I made my comments on the plan, it is an office that I no longer hold, and I have in any case never represented any part of the civil parish of Wickersley. My submissions were offered in my capacity as a private citizen and a resident of the civil parish of Wickersley. It is a mischaracterisation to represent me as a councillor, and I ask that the document be edited to characterise me as a local resident.

Looking at the Neighbourhood Plan authors' responses to the opinions offered by local residents, I am disappointed to see a strong streak of defensiveness and negativity, in which the authors have sought to rebut everything that was not entirely supportive of their own opinions. The purpose of public consultation is to obtain a critical review from the people likely to be affected by a proposal, and to seek to take public opinion into account and thus to improve the proposal. In seeking to rebut anything other than complete agreement, the authors have shown contempt for public opinion. It is to be hoped that the Examiners will take note of this.

In specific regard to P.12, policy GP1, there is a curious British tendency to over-regulate things, and the draft Neighbourhood Plan has fallen victim to it. Does Wickersley have "character areas"? Perhaps it does, but planning law already requires developments to be in keeping with their settings; and if the character areas can be said to exist, then it is a matter of fact that they came into existence in the absence of anything more than general planning law. Insofar as the Design Guide could have a practical purpose, that purpose is already fulfilled by the aforementioned principles in planning law, and the

Neighbourhood Plan could be made easier to understand and to implement by simply deleting the Design Guide. A shedful of public money may well have been spent on the creation of the Design Guide, but there is no reason to throw good money after bad by retaining it and suffering the consequences of over-regulation.

In specific regard to P.26 and policy GP5, I reiterate that the conservation area has no need of a specific design guide: conservation area rules do an adequate job as they are, and the proposed design guide is just an extra layer of bureaucracy unto no useful end. Indeed, given the varied and rather higgledy-piggledy nature of the conservation area's built environment, it is probably a disadvantage to have a design guide at all, as its tendency would be to homogenise an area that is largely defined by diversity.

In specific regard to P.34 and policy H3, the person who responded to my comment did so on the expressed assumption that my reference to "modern materials" could be interpreted uniquely as a reference to uPVC. It can't; and the response is therefore invalid. Apart from having a tendency towards dilapidation, wooden doors and window frames are dimensionally unstable and therefore unreliable in regard to draught-proofing; and both factors make them less energy efficient in service than modern materials. It was an unpleasant surprise to have my supportive statement treated so negatively. To be clear, my argument is for modern material and methods, whatever they will turn out to be as the years unfold. It is by implication an argument against reversion to the materials and methods of the past.

In specific regard to p.46 and policy VC1, the response to my comments ignores the prominence of restaurants and bars in the recent economic and social development of the village centre. To constrain them is tantamount to constraining growth and social development per se. It is all very well to say that other uses exist: the problem is that they aren't growing and won't provide occupiers for void premises. Is Wickersley to carry on becoming more vibrant and social, or is it to wither and die?

In specific regard to P.54, additional comments, I reiterate that the public opinion survey contained a sample bias in regard to the age of the respondents. It is standard practice to normalise the results of an opinion poll to remove any observed sampling biases, and the response to my comment entirely misses this point. To normalise in this case is not to devalue the contribution of any individual respondent, but merely to correct for an over-representation of an age group.

Q5. Do you wish to be notified of the Council's decision under Regulation 19 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulation 2012 whether to accept the Examiners' recommendation? (please tick) . Yes, please notify me of the Council's decision