

Planning Inquiry

Address: Land west of Royal Hill Road, Spondon, Derby; Ward: Spondon

Proposal: Residential development including access arrangement for up to 90 dwellings

Objection: Cllr John Wright; resident Dale Road, Spondon, Derby

I am a long-standing resident of Spondon and since May 2023 have been a City councillor for the Ward of Chaddesden East which forms the other boundary for the Chaddesden/Spondon green wedge in which the Royal Hill Road proposal lies. It should be noted at the outset green spaces and parks are at the heart of Derby's identity, indeed Derby Arboretum, established in 1840, is widely recognised as Britain's first public park.

The application to build on this site was rejected by the Derby City Council Planning Committee as it does not meet the requirements of the Local Plan, in particular CP18 this is not without precedent, previous similar applications for this site have been rejected for the same reasons rendering the site inappropriate for residential development.

I consider that other Core Principles are contravened too, CP16 – Green Infrastructure; states 'The Council will seek to maintain, enhance and manage Derby's green infrastructure.' This application does nothing to improve public green spaces, it merely tries to limit its impact. This principle seeks to enhance, not degrade green wedges, specifically at 'd) the Council will identify Green Wedges as areas of land that define the City's neighbourhoods and seek improvements to enhance the wider green infrastructure network.'

The current local plan remains the local plan for decision making, it is recognised, however, that the tilted balance and presumption in favour of development applies as the city does not have a 5-year supply of sites for housing. The new local plan will not reach reg18 (public consultation stage until January 2026) and then submitted as a reg19 Plan by December 2026 and so currently holds little or no influence over planning decisions. Recent public feedback in my own Ward to a proposed development on a former farm demonstrates opposition to new residential developments on countryside that penetrates into the City so the contents of any new plan is currently speculative.

The housing requirement in the adopted Local Plan Policy (CP6) was, and still is not being met due to the lack of housing sites so paragraph 11d of the National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) requires that where there is no 5 year supply this means granting planning permission unless the conditions of 11d are met. Derby's green wedges fit into the definition of 'Local Green Space' described in paragraphs 103 to 108 in the NPPF 2024 and thereby fulfil the requirements of 11d(i). I recognise that a housing land supply of some 3 years is a significant shortfall and therefore very significant weight was applied in favour of this application that could have contributed to increasing this supply, however, on balance the committee found that it was not sufficient to tilt the balance in favour of development. The NPPF says the development should be refused if policies within the NPPF provide a clear reason for refusing, one of the policies the NPPF is referring to is Green Spaces and this reason was prominent in the Committee's decision to refuse planning. The application failed the first test, enough in itself but it failed the second test too. The second test; any adverse impacts of 'approving development' would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, here the report to Committee itself documented many dis-benefits, loss of the green corridor, congestion, insufficient local infrastructure etc with the only benefit being the

houses, also the 117 objections from residents did, and the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England did too. Although the tilted balance was applied it was not sufficient to grant outline permission.

I and other objectors recognise the city needs to plan and provide suitable housing sites that are deliverable to accommodate many new homes in the new local plan. This 90 could make a small contribution but not at the expense of contravening the fundamental principles of the Plan, which is creating a city with the 'green' amenities that make it a home for people and businesses rather than just bricks and mortar.

Officers have commissioned a green wedge / green belt review for an independent test which it is hoped can be relied upon in validating choices for allocations both to objectors and importantly developers, however, the results of the study are not available for you to consider.

The recent decision of the Planning Committee, as I referred to earlier, is not unique, you know of the decision relating to Acorn Way which others have referred to in detail. I submitted to you on the 31st January this year, the remaining details of two previous applications to build residential housing on 'green wedge' land at the same location or nearby to the present refused application.

Although both of these applications are historic; 1976 and 1985.

1. They both state as the reasons for failure as 'wedge' land between two communities that approval for development would set a precedent that could lead to the gradual coalescence of two distinct residential communities, the later refusal also states that the application is contrary to the local plan and the City's Structure Plan. These reasons are consistent with the 2024 decision of the Planning Committee. For the last 50 years the Council and residents of Derby have consistently recognised this particular small but important wedge or 'lung of the city' needs to be protected not just as green space but to support the wider policies of the Council to maintain the distinct identities of its communities.

2. A counter argument to this proposal is that many thing things have changed within the last 50 years including the need to build more housing for Derby, this is true and is a powerful argument, however, in Spondon over this time significant numbers of new houses have been built contributing to the city's housing need.

3. Another issue to be aware of is over this period Spondon's infrastructure has not expanded to meet the impact of the additional housing, the roads and drainage have remained largely unchanged as have the other key services for residents, the schools, surgeries etc, more on this later.

Returning to the adopted Local Plan in its Introduction the then Chair of the Planning states: 'Derby has 'valued areas of green space', more important now than ever, this is still the case.

It is worth noting here that Spondon's green infrastructure this is also under threat from the successful Spondon Wood application in Erewash, seeking to build hundreds of new houses near Royal Hill Road on designated Green Belt. Spondon residents are having their green spaces jeopardised on all fronts and although the Derby City Planning Committee could not influence that decision it did, in my view, consider fully the implications of the out-of-date CP6, consider other relevant core principles, the NPPF and other legislation & guidance in their public meeting.

In summary I would propose that the Committee's decision was well considered and compliant with legislation, guidance, planning and public opinion.

ENDS