

For the attention of the RH Nigel Adams MP

RE: Selby District Local Plan and specifically the proposed Heronby new town development  
- A joint letter from the Chairman of Escrick, Stillingfleet & Cawood Parish Councils to our MP

Dear Mr Adams

We write to you as respective Chairman of the Parish Councils for the three settlements closest to and most affected by the planned Heronby development, that is part of the Selby District Council (SDC) Publication Local Plan undergoing its final consultation period.

During the March 2021 initial consultation, all of our three Councils gave feedback to SDC with good quality reasons why the Heronby proposal should be rejected in favour of other better suited options. All these views were ignored.

It was not until 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022 that we were advised that Heronby was to be the chosen SDC site for mass housing; until that point, the disappointing quality of the local Councillor feedback we had received, indicated that the Burn site was likely to be the chosen option. Just a few days later on 4<sup>th</sup> August we watched the live feed of the SDC Executive Committee meeting pass acceptance of their Local Plan with Heronby as the recommended site from the three that were allegedly evaluated.

Considering we have now recently been advised by SDC planners that Burn was actually classed as a Zone 3 flood risk in 2014 and Church Fenton ultimately Zone 2 with 'access problems', why were these sites not replaced with brownfield sites which could have been built on, earlier in the process? At that point in time would it not have made sense for SDC to evaluate the process again and if no two alternative large sites were forthcoming to compare with the Heronby proposal, then explore other options to meet housing targets from a greater number of smaller sites - which we are now suggesting as the best option.

Ultimately, Heronby was left at the end of the SDC evaluation as the only site from the three candidates that was not in a flood area, meaning it was selected by default. What sort of professional, fair, cost effective evaluation process is that for a local Council to follow?

The Local Plan was voted through 4<sup>th</sup> August by just four Councillors as follows, all Conservative :-

Mark Crane, SDC District Councillor for Brayton and North Yorkshire Councillor (NYC) for Brayton & Barlow, he lives in Brayton;

Tim Grogan, SDC District Councillor for South Milford, NYC for Monk Fryston & South Milford, he lives in South Milford;

Cliff Lunn, SDC District Councillor for Thorpe Willoughby, NYC Councillor for Thorpe Willoughby & Hambleton, he lives in Thorpe Willoughby;

David Buckle, SDC District Councillor for Sherburn in Elmet, no NYC role, he lives in Sherburn in Elmet.

It was noted that not one of the above attending Councillors asked a question about the proposed arrangements for the delivery of the STIL-4 Heronby site proposal. This is probably the biggest decision SDC has made in a century, voted through by four Conservative Councillors, and not one question was asked!

Escrick and Stillingfleet's previous NYCC Councillor Richard Musgrave was present at the meeting until the Agenda item on Publication Local Plan and then had to leave, for reasons we still do not understand other than there appears to have been a planning issue involving him and he was removed from the evaluation process earlier this year. A full explanation why this area was left without any representation in the meeting needs to be uncovered.

However, that issue aside, in any other organisation would the four individuals who can vote to pass the building of a new town the size of Heronby with 4,000 houses on good quality agricultural land, who represent areas adjacent to the two other sites that were supposedly evaluated, be actually allowed to vote it through? SDC is part of the government machine and as such should set an example to the electorate of fairness. If this process is not looked at again by the Conservative party it really will not reflect well on your party and you will continue to lose seats at all levels of government. Please take time to consider how you are perceived with regard to the process outlined.

We will as Parish Councils, via the [www.haltheronby.co.uk](http://www.haltheronby.co.uk) action group and as individuals give feedback to SDC during this consultation period on the three categories listed as :-

- Legal Compliance - does the Plan meet the legal and procedural requirements?
- Soundness - has the Plan been positively prepared, justified, effective, and consistent with national policy?
- Duty to Cooperate - has the Council worked and engaged effectively with both neighbouring authorities and statutory bodies?

However, at this point, with SDC soon to be absorbed into North Yorkshire Council (NYC) we respectfully ask you to liaise with SDC & NYC with a view to pausing the Local Plan process, as has been done at Hinckley and Bosworth Council for sound legal reasons, as we believe you were made aware of recently by Dr Howard Ferguson.

There is added reason for SDC to pause their Local Plan, very shortly NYC will be launching their own Local Plan process and as the CEO of NYC recently informed us in correspondence "...we will also have to decide at which point the work on the current local plans is halted and resources diverted towards the new plan." Richard Flinton went on to say that NYC do have a key role to play now "in the process as Local Highway Authority..... traffic and transport implications as you have highlighted are significant and as yet are not resolved".

With new political leadership and the new Unitary Council about to take over with their own plan, would it not make sense to pause the SDC local plan and avoid further waste of tax payers' money, especially as a major feature of the Heronby plan is a by-pass for Escrick which has not been properly justified, discussed (Duty to Co-operate terms) or funded?

Using these arguments, we ask for your help in approaching the relevant authorities to ask they take time to evaluate the alternative brownfield sites or smaller site options. In doing so, it would avoid many future legal challenges, very poor media coverage for the Conservative Party and all the harm this will cause to any local political buy-in in the future - rather than continuing in the way this process has evolved to date.

Liz Truss has already stated that she wants to end "Stalanist housing targets and make it easier to build on brownfield sites" and end Solar Panel installations on good quality agricultural land (such as the one planned to feed into the grid adjacent to Heronby) that are "a blight on the landscape". We are asking you as our local MP to look at the bigger political situation, to talk at a Conservative Party level and a local Council level and halt the SDC Local Plan now. This is justified by all the reasons

given above, even without the further arguments that are to come from the Parish Councils and [www.haltheronby.co.uk](http://www.haltheronby.co.uk) over the coming months during and after the SDC consultation period.

It has already been indicated by government that 'Duty to Co-operate' will be replaced by a new 'Alignment test' leaving uncertainty about how Councils should treat housing and employment needs. In addition, the promised new 'Prospectus' for change to the National Planning Policy Framework is yet to be published, so why not at this stage pause local area planning? This would enable NYC to carry out a fresh, truly impartial appraisal of the new wider geographical area and the sites that can actually be more acceptably built on, future housing needs in each region and commission professional impact reports on Environment/Ecology plus Traffic and Transport for the proposed Heronby site scheme.

In appealing for your help, we hope we do not just receive a response from your office saying nothing more than it is not a matter for Mr Adams and we should respond to SDC during the consultation period. We feel this matter requires your utmost consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Terry Chambers – Escrick Parish Council Chairman

Juan Brooks – Stillingfleet Parish Council Chairman

Lesley Dennon – Cawood Parish Council Chairman