

Sheffield asked twice, was told “no Green Belt”, then reversed that in a fortnight

Sheffield residents said no to Green Belt development in the 2015 consultation, and said it again in the 2020 consultation. The Plan now going to the vote releases 14 Green Belt sites. That change of strategy was never put back to the public.

7,845

signatures on the city-wide petition by 2 May 2026

19,172

more across site-specific petitions

6,000

representations to the two 2025 consultations

15 days

from committee report to the Full Council vote

1 The public was asked twice. Both times the answer was the same.

When the Council first consulted on where housing growth should go, in 2015, the answer came back plainly. The next consultation document opened by acknowledging it:

“Sheffielders said loud and clear that they don't want to see building on Sheffield's countryside and the Green Belt.”

Cllr Bob Johnson, Cabinet Member for Transport and Development, opening the foreword to Issues and Options, September 2020, on the 2015 consultation. He added that he did not want to see it either.

That document went out under Regulation 18 in September 2020 with three options. Option A met the full 40,000 homes the city needed with nothing released from the Green Belt. When the responses were summarised in March 2021, the first theme recorded was strong opposition to Green Belt development.

2 The reversal, and the consultation that did not happen

On 6 February 2025 the Inspectors raised the housing requirement and asked the Council to look again. Building on greenfield Green Belt sites, they recorded, would represent **“a significant departure from the spatial strategy”** that had informed the work so far (EXAM 120, para 37). Regulation 18 exists to consult the public on a change of strategy before a plan is fixed. The Council did not return to it.

A report naming 14 Green Belt sites carried 8 votes to 5 at committee on 30 April 2025, then 45 to 31 with 4 abstentions at an extraordinary Full Council a fortnight later. What followed was a consultation on which sites, not on whether. Cllr Penny Baker, the Liberal Democrat deputy leader, told the chamber that a council which asks people their opinion should listen to the answer.

3 What happened instead

Residents and tenants directly affected were never notified of the decision to use Green Belt. Requests for planning officers to attend community meetings, including some arranged through local MPs, were declined. The Council ran a housing policy consultation in the same period with a 12-week window, 66 in-person events and targeted outreach; these allocations had nothing comparable. The then Leader, Cllr Tom Hunt, has since accepted that the distribution is “unfair” and that the Plan “might have looked different with more time”. The Head of Planning told affected residents at Woodhouse Library on 17 June 2025 that “sacrifices would be needed”, but that they had his “sympathy”.

4 Not the change the Inspectors asked for

The Inspectors wanted the evidence widened to cover **smaller greenfield sites spread across the city**, tested as a reasonable alternative strategy (EXAM 120, paras 14 and 24). What came back concentrates the release into a few communities - a pattern never consulted on either.

The public was asked twice if they wanted Green Belt development, and answered "no".
It was never asked again. The Plan releases 14 Green Belt sites.