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Date: 21 September 2026

Councillor Fran Belbin
Leader of Sheffield City Council
Town Hall
SHEFFIELD
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Rt Hon Matthew Pennycook MP
Minister of State for Housing and Planning

Dear Minister of State

Sheffield stands with the Government on its goal to deliver more homes, including social and affordable housing. We are committed to building the homes we need for our growing city, for our children and our grandchildren, and we are currently progressing several major house building developments.

We know we need a Local Plan to achieve our ambitions. Sheffield, England's fourth largest city, has not had a plan for many years and the Sheffield Plan currently under examination has been worked on for over a decade. Our original plan, submitted in 2023, identified sufficient brownfield and greenfield land for 34,700 additional homes and 184 hectares of employment land.

On its first examination the Planning Inspectorate required us to include an additional 3,539 homes and 53 hectares of employment land. Given the timeline we were required to work to, our only option to meet this demand was to put forward sites that had been promoted in Sheffield's green belt.

The Planning Inspector concurred with our analysis that we had exhausted all of our sites on brownfield or greenfield in the urban area.

The green belt sites are concentrated in the north and south east of the city, and developing these sites is deeply unpopular with the affected communities. Green belt campaigners, who are exceptionally well informed and committed, have raised a large number of concerns, through the consultation process and directly with the Council, about the Sheffield Plan.

Their concerns include:

- The unfairness of removing access to green belt in specific areas – for example, in Woodhouse ward, S13, residents will lose 92 hectares of green space that is well used by the community, and in Chapeltown, S35, there are seven proposed sites within a mile of each other that will fundamentally change the character of the area;

- Questions around whether affordable housing will be available in the right places – their analysis is that affordable housing is most needed in the west of the city, where there is little development proposed;

- Whether supporting infrastructure will be adequate, including impacts on traffic, health and education services;

- The impacts on ecology and biodiversity in these areas;

- The cumulative impact of neighbouring Local Plans (Barnsley, Rotherham and North East Derbyshire); and

- The loss of quality agricultural land.

Sheffield's green belt campaigners are not 'NIMBYs'. They understand the need for a plan and the urgency of building new homes. They have fully engaged with the consultation process, to the extent that it is currently undergoing an unprecedented fifth round of consultation.

While councillors are sympathetic to campaigners' concerns, we acknowledge that the examination process has been robust and that, due to the hard work of our planning team over many years, the Plan is likely to be found to be sound. We accept there is a need to include green belt in the Plan, but have misgivings over the extent of green belt development. We recognise that the timescales we have been required to work within have resulted in a distribution of green belt sites which impacts particularly intensely on a small number of local communities.

Campaigners and councillors alike support the vast majority of the Sheffield Plan, with 90% of new homes and 75% of employment sites on brownfield and greenfield land in the existing urban areas. They want to get on with building the homes our city needs. We recognise that government is bringing in changes to an imperfect framework, but these changes will not happen soon enough to impact our Plan, given where we are in the process. We do not want to abandon this Plan but with more time we would have been able to explore other options and mitigations.

I am mindful too of the lessons that Sheffield City Council is committed to learning from the Sheffield street trees debacle. The inquiry conducted by Sir Mark Lowcock in 2021 highlighted the Council's failure to listen to campaigners and consider alternatives in the face of a similarly unpopular course of action. It would be remiss of me not to pursue every possible alternative outcome to our current situation.

To that end, I would welcome a meeting with you to discuss a way forward with the Sheffield Plan that will address the needs of all of our local communities.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Fran Belbin
Leader of Sheffield City Council

Cc. **Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP,** Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government