

# HIGH PEAK BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council

9 May 2024

<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>Questions of which notice has been given</b>
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Linden Vernon – Head of Democratic Services</b>
<b>WARDS INVOLVED:</b>	<b>Non-Specific</b>

## 1. Question from Carole Hallam:

“Is the cross service working group now in a position to enable vacant properties to count as 'potential supply' towards future requirements, and publish in the next Local Plan or Borough Plan (2023-2027) an estimate of the number of unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties which can realistically be brought back into use to help count towards future requirements, continue to help meet local housing need, and help continue a pathway towards a reduced carbon footprint in the next Local Plan?”

### Response from the Leader:

“In certain circumstances Councils can consider the number of vacant properties within their area as a potential source of future supply that can be counted towards future housing requirements. This can be done where both of two main criteria exist, namely;

1. There is an excessive level of vacant properties within the area
2. There is a programme / funding in place to bring such properties back into residential use.

A vacancy rate of around 3% is considered normal (indeed essential) to allow the housing market to function, with a proportion of properties being empty at any given time whilst

1. being marketed for sale,
2. being refurbished between tenancies or other occupation, or
3. being caught in probate following the death of the previous owner.

Vacancies tend to be lowest in the social rented sector as professional social landlords both want and are able to quickly turn round properties between tenancies.

The Housing and Employment Land Needs Assessment 2022 (HELNA) considered this issue.

[https://www.highpeak.gov.uk/media/7530/High-Peak-HELNA-ISSUE-12.09.22/pdf/61492\\_High\\_Peak\\_HELNA\\_ISSUE\\_120922.PDF?m=1663773285323](https://www.highpeak.gov.uk/media/7530/High-Peak-HELNA-ISSUE-12.09.22/pdf/61492_High_Peak_HELNA_ISSUE_120922.PDF?m=1663773285323)

Para 8.56~ pg 113. Shows that there were 617 long term vacant properties in the borough at October 2020, representing around 1.4%, with overall vacancies representing about 3.2% of stock. These figures being consistent with the long term trends observed from 2004.

This is within the normal (required) range and effectively precludes counting returning vacant units into residential use as a quantifiable element of future supply.

This will of course be kept under review.”

## 2. **Question received from Halina Billingham on behalf of Save Roughfields:**

"Why, in 2014, having excluded Roughfields from the preferred options, did HPBC belatedly decide to include it, despite the fact that the appraisal report had identified 30 other sites for 1100 additional dwellings, all of which scored more favourably than Roughfields? "

### **Response from the Leader:**

"Roughfields has been identified as a potential development site from the 1950s onwards and was recognised as such in the initial Site Options consultation in 2012.

Following that consultation, it was not taken forward into the February 2013 Preferred Options Local Plan consultation as, at the time, the Council could identify sufficient housing sites elsewhere across the Borough.

However, in order to create a local plan that would be compliant and meet the requirements to be approved at Public Examination by the Government Independent Planning Inspector, it was resolved that the annual requirement for housing would need to be increased from 270 homes per year (as set out in the Local Plan preferred options) to 360 homes per year and that the plan period would need to be extended to 2031 from 2028 to ensure that the plan ran for at least 15 years from adoption as required by the National Planning Policy Framework.

This meant the Council needed to undertake an additional site options consultation conducted in December 2013. This proposed that Roughfields be included in the Local Plan. The site was reconsidered for allocation alongside several others across Glossopdale and the rest of the High Peak. The site was subsequently included in the Local Plan Submission Version, published for formal representations in April 2014.

The Draft Sustainability Appraisal (SA) (February 2013) included summary appraisals for over 30 sites in the Glossopdale area. The SA scores ranged from

20 to 43, with the Roughfields site scoring 27. Many other factors are taken into account during the preparation of the Local Plan. The Local Plan was informed by extensive evidence gathering, consultation, and finally close scrutiny at an examination in public by a Government-appointed independent planning inspector who ultimately deemed the Local Plan to meet the appropriate requirements and be taken forward for adoption.

Concerning the site in question, the Inspector concluded that it was justified and viable and that landscaping and infrastructure matters could be satisfactorily addressed.

The Council then agreed to adopt the Local Plan, which included the Roughfields site in April 2016."

### **3. Question from Councillor Fiona Sloman to the Leader:**

Would the leader of the council ask for an explanation of the 17.5 million un allocated monies for special school places from the leader of the dcc . It appears that 91% of the budget has not been used for parents of special needs children .,who are in dire need of support .

Furthermore it appears that one third of EHCP"s (education, health and care plans ) have not been completed within 20 weeks as required by statute . This situation appears to be reprehensible and coupled with other swingeing cuts (day centres ,care homes ) points to dcc lack of humanity towards their residents .

#### **Response from the Leader:**

"I share, as I'm sure with other members of the Council, the concern that funding made available to support children and families in our area with special educational needs has not yet been allocated.

Connect, a local SEN campaign group based in Glossop, has highlighted the need for local facilities, advising that "Parents come to us distressed because their children aren't getting the right support in mainstream schools, and the only option some of these families are faced with is sending their children to schools like Alderwasley Hall in Belper which is over an hour away."

Whilst I understand from a recent media response from the County Council that work is underway to get this capital funding allocated and spent, you can't help but wonder if this highlights the impact of Government cuts to Councils' revenue budgets over the last 14 years and what effect this has had to staff at local Council's that need to put these schemes together.

I'm happy to raise the concerns as requested."