**Presentation to the Planning Inspector, Mr Stephen Normington, Appeal Ref APP/J4423/W/21/3267168 on 25th June 2021**

**by Dr Peter Morgan, Chair, Friends of Hollin Busk**

I am a metallurgist, Chartered Engineer and Fellow of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining. I represent a local community action group formed 4.5 years ago to contest the latest application to build on the green fields of Hollin Busk. This presentation is the view of the local people and I will cover the depth of local feeling and people’s concerns, protection of this landscape and heritage assets. I will address other concerns to the community and how these relate to poor sustainability and I will finish with a view on the regeneration of the Stocksbridge area and why this application does not fit with this vision.

This latest application to build on Hollin Busk has been hanging over the heads of the local community for nearly 5 years. FoHB was formed in early 2017 after a packed meeting in The Castle public house in Bolsterstone. The local community has united to oppose this application. There have been many letters and articles in the local press, this is just the one from last weekend’s Sheffield telegraph (show picture). There has been a huge public response with 524 objections on the Sheffield City Council Planning website. It was refused 12 votes to 1 by the Planning Committee, a significant majority. Around 220 representations have been submitted to the Planning Inspector prior to this Inquiry. Local people are incensed that another attempt has been made to build on the open green fields of Hollin Busk after it was given special protection following the previous appeal refusal by the Secretary of State in 1990. Local people will quote you the words from Sheffield Core Strategy CS72 Protecting Countryside not in the Green Belt, where Hollin Busk is mentioned by name. I will not read it out again.

“The land at Hollin Busk is a large and integral part of the countryside south of Stocksbridge, prominent in local views and providing an important visual break between the settlements of Stocksbridge and Deepcar. Its rural character is greatly valued locally and there is no need to develop it as new housing can be provided on previous developed land within the urban area. It makes a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of Stocksbridge”.

Local people are proud of their steel town that is world renowned for supplying special engineering steel to world leading companies. In a good year it has supplied 20% of the worlds aerospace steel and is still a significant producer that has recently been in the news regarding government concern for its future as Liberty Steel. Technology advancements mean that it now employs around 700 people at Stocksbridge compared to over 7,000 in the past and industrial brownfield land has been released for regeneration. As you have heard local people are not against new housing in the area. Nearly 1,000 new homes are under construction in the Upper Don Valley at 3 big brownfield sites. People, however, do value their close proximity to open countryside, and value this area with its hills, gritstone edges and reservoirs is a “hidden gem” often overshadowed by the Peak District. We like our open spaces and green networks that make up our part of the green city of Sheffield.

Sheffield City Council has historically maintained a consistent policy of protection of Hollin Busk as evidenced by the report dated 20th March 2007 that was presented to the Northern Area Panel. This led into the Core Strategy which again gave protection to Hollin Busk. This report also describes the intention to designate Hollin Busk as Green Belt and outlines why this was not achieved because it would require the opening of the case for a full review of the Green Belt Boundary. Mrs Mills has presented information that suggests a new scoring of the Hollin Busk fields shows that it performs robustly against NPPF criteria and should be considered for Green Belt inclusion in the current review.

Sheffield City Council Planning Committee has maintained a consistent approach in supporting a brownfield regeneration first policy and there have also been recent refusals at Wood Royd (400m down the road) and at Wiggan Farm in Worrall, which are both also green field locations. There have been strong endorsements to protect green open spaces submitted by local people in the recent consultation on the Sheffield Plan.

FoHB fully support the Council statements on landscape and the traditional character of the area. Local people value the open, rolling landscape of agricultural green fields. Statements from the Appellant talk about “limited impact” and “no more than a negligible effect”. We do not agree. A move from an agricultural landscape to a built environment is a high magnitude change that will profoundly affect the local landscape.

Sheffield is the “Green City” that has adopted a policy of green networks and green links. Stocksbridge has a series of green links that run up the valley sides from the bottom of the valley. One of these links effectively separates Stocksbridge from Deepcar and runs up the hillside from Wood Royd fields, includes the NWS of Fox Glen, the open green fields of Hollin Busk, and then onto the Green Belt and the Peak Park. The aerial photograph of the area clearly shows how this green link will be truncated at its south end by the extent of the proposed housing and that the development would totally isolate Fox Glen from open countryside.

Local people have concerns about all the fields at Hollin Busk, not just the ones under discussion at this appeal. They believe that if this appeal is granted then it will be the thin end of the wedge that would open up the whole area for a very large development.

FoHB would also like to re-emphasise to the Inspector the previous planning appeal decisions made by the Secretary of State in 1990, and the appeal decision in 2008 on the proposal to build a house in the garden of Royd Cottage, which both gave reasons for refusal relating to the effect on the local landscape and character of the area.

FoHB fully support the Council statement on heritage. The historic farm complex of listed buildings that comprises the old Royd Farm will be surrounded on three sides totally removing any connection with its associated green fields, thereby destroying any link with its previous working existence. We believe that this would cause significant harm to the setting of these listed buildings.

The revised masterplan of April 2021 rearranges the location of the housing to provide a limited site line of the new proposed SUDS system from one upper window of Royd Farm, and totally misses the point that the new rearranged housing will still cause significant harm. The mitigation to provide tree planting and buffering which would, in time, grow up and smother this side of Royd Farm totally obscuring the much-appreciated open character and nature of the traditional landscape, and views of sunsets in the West.

The community has other concerns, such as road safety at the school, road congestion at the junction of Carr Road and Manchester Road, surface water and sewage drainage, and surface water drainage into Fox Glen. These have been reviewed by the Appellant and the Council, and Statements of Common Ground have been agreed. These concerns have not been identified as main reasons for refusal and local people feel overruled. People who live in the area know differently.

Schoolchildren’s safety around the proposed new access road, due to traffic congestion and car parking, is still a concern. The new proposal is to put in a zebra crossing but it is not located at the school, but 150m up the hill beyond the new access road. Most people will be accessing the school from the opposite direction and will not walk up past the school just to use the crossing 150m away.

Surface water drainage and sewage drainage down Carr Road. Whilst Yorkshire Water and the Council say they can accommodate the development, local people know, and regularly experience that they are having problems now including in 2021.

Surface water drainage into Fox Glen and the effect that this could have on this NWS remains a concern.

Traffic congestion at the Carr Road/Manchester Road junction has been acknowledged to exceed capacity at peak times. Whilst a further 83 houses may not be a significant addition to traffic flows, the issue at the junction is compounded by the much larger new housing underway in the Upper Don Valley particularly at Warncliffe Park, very close to the junction, and will put significant strain on the existing infrastructure. The proposal to put in improved (MOVA) traffic signalling does not appear to be a total solution to local people who regularly experience congestion when exiting Carr Road. It should be noted that Carr Road traffic enters Manchester Road before the lights and has to be granted access to Manchester Road by queueing traffic.

Many of the above issues are related to the steepness of the terrain of the area and the location of the proposed housing. We would ask the Inspector to not dismiss these issues just because the main parties have agreed that individually they are not reasons for refusal. All these aspects add together and contribute to the fact that the proposals do not support sustainability. This is not the right location for new housing. The expert statements admit that the location and terrain will force people to use cars to access amenities and the main shops in Stocksbridge. They persist with their expectation that people can walk and cycle to the shops. The Inspector will have been able to experience the terrain for himself by walking the site during his visit. The sustainability argument is weak. This is the wrong location for new housing.

Whilst we have an important steelworks in our valley, there are areas of industrial land that have been relinquished for regeneration and redevelopment. Sheffield City Council have also identified Stocksbridge and Deepcar as areas for new housing and this is now underway on 3 large brownfield sites and a large number of infill sites. Local people are not against new housing with over 1000 new homes being built in the area. The Sheffield HELAA 2020 Report identifies around 350 on infill sites and another possible 350 on the old steelworks scrapyard that has yet to be developed. The report specifically identifies the Hollin Busk land as unsuitable for housing which is consistent with previous assessments that have not included it in housing plans.

Stocksbridge and Deepcar need to regenerate, but we want an economic recovery that plays to our strengths. We are surrounded by wonderful countryside that is used for many types of recreation. Local people have a strong connection with the outdoors and the lakelands corridor that stretches down the edge of the Pennines to the NW and W of Sheffield.

Stocksbridge has been fortunate in receiving £25m of Town Fund money to help regenerate our town. We want to play our part in Sheffield the Green City. Building houses on open green fields next to the Green Belt does not fit with this vision. The Appellant argues that Stocksbridge has always been identified for new housing, to justify their proposals for green field sites. The situation has now changed with much brownfield land available in Sheffield and in our valley. SCC is pursuing a brownfield regeneration first policy. The Appellant either fails to recognise, or, does not wish to follow SCC policy and continues an aggressive attack on green field sites. Local people are incensed and want this appeal refused.