

LANCASTER LOCAL PLAN

**SC2.1 - FREEMANS WOOD
SPEAKING NOTE**

1. The title is misleading - Freemans Wood is a linear woodland running along the southern edge of the site. The proposed SC2.1 site is very much larger and the Lune Industrial Estate/Satnam land contains significant areas of scrub (which is inaccessible) and a very large open grass area (former works playing fields).
2. The site at 13.66 ha is by far and away the largest SC2 site (the next nearest is Greaves Park at 5.93 ha, but most are much smaller still).
3. The “call for sites” exercise re Urban Greenspace produced two nomination forms:
 - LGS-01: This related to only part of the SC2.1 land. It is far from clear what “community” the land is alleged to serve and no special attributes are noted. On the contrary, it is said to be valuable “because it is a woodland”. Yet most of the site is open or self-seeded scrubland.
 - LGS-49: This appears to have been submitted by the Friends of Freemans Wood who are currently promoting the site as a TVG. The Friends claim 90+ supporters. Again, a relatively modest number and unlikely to signify a community in itself. Which community the SC2 site - as a whole - is said to serve is unclear. Possibly Mares Ward? The Friends have

successfully submitted claims to have three footpaths registered across the site. These routes can readily be seen on the ground. They are not consistent with claims that the whole SC2 area has any particular recreational value.

4. The Local Greenspace Ass Document (May 2018) (En-GS-03) looked at the site under reference GS49. To what extent this assessment was informed by an actual site visit is unclear, eg under “Richness of Wildlife” it states, “The woods are reported to be full of mature trees.” This is not consistent with the author having been on site (but it is consistent with the site being private and fenced, albeit that the fencing has been smashed down repeatedly). The uses of the site are noted to include motor sports (the former works playing fields grass area) and BMX use. Such uses are neither lawful or normally associated with greenspace recreational activity.

5. Policy (NPPF, March 2013)

- LGS - not appropriate for most green areas or open space (Paragraph 77). Therefore it is a designation to be used sparingly.
- DC over it is consistent with Green Belt. Therefore a draconian policy which must fully merit the designation.
- It must be capable of enclosing beyond the Plan period. Given that the next LP will probably involve further Green Belt release, how confident can one be re LGS?

6. The Paragraph 77 indicators of value:

- It should be in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves. There is no clear answer to which “community” it does serve?
- It should be local in character and not an extensive trace of land. On any view, the SC2.1 site is a large area.

- It must have particular local significant (it is submitted that this must be objectively assessed and demonstrated and not simply based on local value - most people place a high value on the greenspace that is close to them in any urban context).
- Beauty - The Lune/Satnam land is perfectly pleasant but it does not have any particular beauty and none appears to have been claimed.
- Historic Significance - It was a tip and then part of it (a large part) was for workers' sport. This does not signify any particular historic value (and yet historic value is cited under SC2.1).
- Recreational Value - It is clear that the paths to be recorded as footpaths are used for walking, but the site as a whole has no clear and special value in that regard. (It is difficult to see how motor vehicle or BMX use could qualify.)
- Tranquillity - Sounds from the adjacent urban area are regularly heard.
- Wildlife - No special value is noted by any objective survey evidence.

In an area as constrained as Lancaster, LGS should only be used very sparingly and where fully justified.

D E MANLEY

25th April 2019

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