

Question:

Regarding the proposed sale of land adjacent to the Hobbucks Nature reserve off Killisick Lane in Arnold. Despite the commitment from Gedling Borough Council Councillors just last year not to sell the land, why has the sale of this land been brought back to the table with a consultation that took place over the school summer holiday period with just 2 weeks for residents to respond? The consultation was made live on the 4th August with a close date of the 18th of August.

Answer:

We listened to the views of some local residents last year and we did not go ahead with the sale of the land at the time. Since then a number of things have changed which means we think it's only right that we go back to the people and let them have their say on these new proposals. We now know that the owners of the nearby private land are in the process of selling their site and a planning application is expected imminently from a house builder, which significantly impacts our decisions regarding our land. We therefore needed to move quickly during the summer, as acting quickly could help to secure a more comprehensive form of development on the wider housing allocation. Otherwise, there is a significant risk that individual landowners could progress discrete housing proposals, which could be to the detriment of the area.

If it is possible to secure a more comprehensive form of development, the Hobbucks Nature Reserve will not only be preserved but could be improved and extended, which I am sure will be something that local residents who use the area will welcome. This would meet the needs of our borough for new homes and will also ensure the local nature reserve is enriched. I am proud it was this Labour administration that proposed and established the Hobbucks as a designated Local Nature Reserve, initiated in our Cabinet meeting on 25 March 2015. This Labour-led Council will always protect and invest in the Hobbucks Nature Reserve.

We ran a consultation and advertised the potential disposal of the site for two consecutive weeks in the local newspaper, as required by statute, giving residents the opportunity to respond. We have continued to receive responses since that date and they will be taken into consideration when any decisions in relation to the land are made.

We also cannot ignore the elephant in the room which is the fact that since we made the decision in April we are still one of the worst affected councils in the country in terms of government funding and we are being left with little choice but to look at ways to generate income so we can continue to provide services.