

Eckington Way - Additional submission 18/09/2025

Prior to the recent publication of the Sheffield Plan Examination Hearings, I was unaware of any further developments regarding the Eckington Way site within the Draft Local Plan. My understanding was that the focus was on the green belt release of new housing and employment land and the Eckington Way issue had been dealt with at the hearings last year with a decision being made after the upcoming hearings along with the plan as a whole.

I note that the agenda for the 30th September it states (point 22):

“Does the reason for rejecting the Hesley Wood site for Travelling Showpeople accommodation, as listed in paragraph 9.3.9 in the updated Integrated Impact Assessment (EXAM 125), still apply? Did the Eckington Way site score better than the Hesley Wood site option in other ways?”

Upon reading this my office consulted the Integrated Impact Assessment. I should note that Sheffield City Council at no point since the hearings last year indicated to me or to my office that the Eckington Way site was being discussed in any way shape or form. I would therefore like to take this late opportunity to respond to the Integrated Impact Assessment and the implications for Eckington Way.

Firstly, I am glad to see Hesley Wood has been highlighted as an alternative site for the travelling community. Given the significant problems facing the Eckington Way site it makes a suitable alternative.

What I am confused by however is the Council's position in the Integrated Impact Assessment dated April 2025. I stress this date because point 9.3.9-9.3.11 states:

“The Hesley Wood site lies within the Green Belt and is not considered to be previously developed; therefore, not falling within the scope of the spatial strategy for the Plan. Given that the Sheffield Plan proposes allocation of the site at Eckington Way (SES03) for a Travelling Showpeople and Employment site (which is consistent with the spatial strategy) the land at Hesley Wood is not required as an alternative location for that use. As Hesley Wood is not available for Gypsy and Traveller site use, it is not a reasonable alternative location for that use either.”

I do not understand that after the Council have made a clear decision to look at green belt land to release for development why they are stating in the above that Hesley Wood cannot be considered as it is in the green belt. This reads to me as a position that has not been updated accordingly since the changes in circumstances earlier this year.

As such it is not correct to say (as of April 2025) that they cannot use Hesley Wood as it is in the green belt as they have changed their position on the green belt.

The Assessment claiming that Eckington Way has already been proposed also neglects the significant concerns about the site by both myself and residents that have failed to be adequately addressed by the Council. This was explained at length in both my previous written submission on the issue as well as the hearings alongside Chris Young KC.

The site appraisals on page 407 of the Integrated Impact Assessment I also find to be wanting. Both sites score effectively the same, although I do note that Eckington Way has more significant concerns than Hesley Wood (impact on air quality, proximity to hazardous installations or closed landfill sites and use of Previously Developed Land). I also want to reiterate the point made in my previous submission that based on the appraisal process alone there were 36 sites that scored the same and a further 15 that scored better than Eckington Way.

In addition to this however the concerns that have been raised about Eckington Way are not reflected in this appraisal. Specifically, around traffic congestion and build up which is already a significant problem in the area, the topography of the site and the other practical constraints that make development of this site particularly challenging.

I outlined these concerns in my written submission, and these were discussed at length at the hearings last year. It is therefore disappointing to see that the Council have (from the evidence I have seen) not taken this opportunity to include them in their further work on this. I do think it is damaging to their case and continues to reflect how inadequate Eckington Way is as a site for travelling showpeople and industrial use.

I wanted to reiterate these concerns and reference them in relation to the documents presented by Sheffield City Council that I have just been made aware of.

I appreciate that the consultation period closed earlier this year, and this is outside of that time frame, but given the Sheffield City Council did not communicate any changes to myself or my office and I have only just learnt about this development I hope this will be considered by the Inspectorate as exceptional circumstances.