

SNAP-SHOT CANVASSING OF DURSLEY RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

BACKGROUND

This was *not* a co-ordinated campaign by any action group, as a group has not been set up. It was a brief, one-off, snap-shot canvass of local opinion, conducted by two concerned residents who wanted to see if public opinion in Dursley, matched their belief that local opposition to building to the south east of the town (including PS29) is the general consensus. Off the back of this, two neighbours offered to spend a few hours knocking on doors to again test if there was general support in the locality for objecting to the inclusion of site PS29.

METHOD

No large banners were used.

There was no prior publicity at all.

No displays or tables were set up.

Two people spoke at random to people (residents and visitors) in the town.

They had clip-boards and petition sheets for those who wished to sign.

If people did not already know the location of site in question, they were shown an aerial image of the location and a photo taken from one the meadows under threat.

Information sheets were handed to those who wanted more information, which explained that it was a local plan strategy consultation (rather than a planning application) and also directed them to the Stroud District Council website.

Canvassing took place in Castle St and Parsonage St on Dec 22nd 2018 for approximately 3 hours. The door-to-door canvassing by two other people was conducted as and when they could spare a little time (the total hours for this were not counted).

Petition wording:

We call upon Stroud District Council to continue to protect the meadows and green fields to the south east of Dursley and remove 'PS29' as a 'preferred' location for development in the Local Plan Review. It is a sensitive, valued landscape and unsustainable because it will undoubtedly increase traffic congestion and pollution.

RESULTS

1. The overwhelming verbal response was that building towards the south east of Dursley is not considered appropriate and it is not wanted.
2. A small minority said that more houses had to be built somewhere – they didn't really care and/or wrongly assumed the petition was against new house-building per se.
3. Many of those visiting the area and families for Christmas said that it was the countryside which kept them coming back and they wanted it protected.
4. Within a relatively short space of time and without much planning or effort, hundreds of signatures were willingly offered. Evidence (the original sheets) to be submitted to Stroud District Council in person.

5. Number of street petition signatures = 415 (8 of which were added at a later date)
6. Number of door-to-door petition signatures = 305
7. Total number of petition signatures = 720
8. A significant number of people heartily thanked us for what we were doing.

RECURRING COMMENTS AND THEMES:

1. Genuine 'jaw-dropping' disbelief that this particular site was under threat yet again. People thought that the government planning inspector had only recently made it clear that the location was unsuitable, so why are SDC even considering this as potential? They thought it should not even be on the table.
2. Already too much traffic in town. The traffic is awful. We get stuck at rush hour. (Whilst the discussions were taking place in Castle St. the road was repeatedly jammed / backed-up, with people struggling to get in and out of the car parks.)
3. Dursley has already taken more than its fair share of new estates (Listers, Bymacks, Union St., Mawdsleys)
4. Why aren't we building on brown-field first before touching the green field sites?
5. We need farmland to grow our own food, especially with Brexit.
6. New houses should be built close to major road and rail networks. Cam would be better.
7. Cam has already taken enough houses too.
8. It is the wrong side of Dursley to build any more.
9. Already too much pressure on local services. It's difficult to get a doctor appointment now.
10. Where are all these people going to work?
11. Lots of people have moved here from Bristol and commute back down every day.
12. Dursley people can't afford the houses that get built.
13. What happened to the bypass that was supposed to go through the Crest Nicholson (ex Bymacks) estate?
14. We should be planning a brand new town to take the pressure off existing communities, because services and roads are already over-stretched.
15. Sorry – too much to do to today / can't stop

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that if a better-co-ordinated campaign with longer duration (than the few hours spent) was conducted in easier weather conditions, it would not be difficult to reach well over 1100 signatures.

The overwhelming majority of people spoken to, did not approve of development to the south east of Dursley, including the site PS29.

Based on these snap-shot, indicative findings, Stroud District Council must give weight to the widely-held opposition to PS29, as expressed by Dursley residents and visitors from far and wide.

PS29 should be removed from the Local Plan Review Emerging Strategy and future proposals for this location swiftly and emphatically dismissed.