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Councillor S Brunt
Councillor J Dickinson
Town Hall
Chesterfield
S40 1LP

Please ask for Huw Bowen
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Our Ref
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25 November, 2015

Dear Councillor Brunt and Councillor Dickinson

Re – Petition against development of Goldwell Hill (Ashgate Road) Car Park

This statement is in response to the petition against the potential development of the Goldwell Hill Car Park (Ashgate Road), by petitioners concerned about the loss of a car park and subsequent increases in problems caused by on street car parking. There were 690 signatories to the petition.

Chesterfield needs to deliver around 380 new homes every year to meet the housing needs of the borough and is committed, through the Council's Local Plan, to delivering these in the most sustainable locations, where residents can walk and cycle to the shops and services they need, and using previously developed land as much as possible. To do this the council is obliged to demonstrate a supply of suitable housing sites to last a minimum of five years.

However the council cannot currently demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites. This situation has become more severe over the last year, largely due to historically low levels of house building in the borough. The car park site has been a long-standing allocation for housing development in the council's Local Plan. And indeed, planning permission was granted in 2008 to redevelop part of the site for 13 affordable homes but this was not implemented.

As a site allocated in the local plan on previously developed land, the principle of housing development at this location is already well established. Failure to release this allocated site for development would not only worsen the five year supply situation, it would put additional pressure on the council to allocate or grant permission for housing on greenfield sites and undermine confidence in the deliverability of other allocated sites.

If, after allocating the Ashgate site for housing in the Local Plan, publishing a planning brief and going through a tender process, the Council decided not to sell the site to a legitimate bidder, it could also seriously undermine our ability in the future to use Compulsory Purchase Order powers to acquire land from other landowners in order to deliver housing in the

borough. Objectors would be able to point to it as evidence of the appearance of different standards being applied.

Before any housing can be developed on the site, any developer will need to submit a planning application to the council. This will provide an opportunity to consider any potential impacts of the development, including any that might be caused by the loss of parking, and how these can be minimised. This could include the use of conditions or planning obligations (a 'Section 106' agreement) to control development or to require any developer to contribute towards managing the impact, for example through contributing to a Traffic Regulation Order to control on-street parking. This also has the potential to help alleviate existing parking problems as well as mitigating any impact from the loss of the car park.

Whilst redevelopment of the site would result in a loss of car parking it is not necessarily the case that the closure of this car park would result in additional on-street parking. Users of the current car park have chosen to pay to park securely off-street rather than on the roads and are therefore more likely to be displaced to other town centre car parks, where there is currently capacity during weekdays, and where parking arrangements exist that afford users similar pricing arrangements to that currently available to them at the Ashgate Road Car park. There are at present, almost 4,800 pay to park spaces in the town centre, 2,500 of which are operated by the Council, with occupancy rates of around 65%. There are an additional 150 spaces being provided as part of the new Queens Park Leisure Centre, and it is anticipated that the first commercial phase of the Waterside development will include a new 442 space Multi Storey Car Park.

For the reasons covered in the statement above, it is therefore proposed to continue with the council's plans to sell the Ashgate Road Car Park and associated buildings to a developer interested in bringing forward the site for housing development.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Huw Bowen'.

Huw Bowen
Chief Executive