

**Public Apology from Ruth Milsom following request for the Councillor responsible for anonymous posts on the Save Chapeltown, Ecclesfield & Grenoside Green Belt Land to make themselves known– 16<sup>th</sup> July 2025**

It's me. I'm a councillor in Crookes & Crosspool ward which is not at all affected by the greenbelt release proposals. And I feel very uncomfortable about that.

I joined this group because I was concerned about a degree of confusion around some aspects when the news first broke about the greenbelt requirement for the Local Plan. I wanted to help in ensuring that people were properly equipped with facts to participate in the formal consultation.

I also wanted to virtually 'meet' those who are devoting so much of themselves to this cause. And when some of you came to address the Full Council in May your words carried deeper meaning to me because of that. I feel more connected to your campaign because I see your upset and anger. Politicians are often accused of being out of touch and remote, making decisions on things they know nothing about. I aim not to do that.

I firmly believe in public consultation as the very least that we all deserve. Many people want to participate further than just being consulted formally on matters that affect them - I believe in participatory democracy too, and would much prefer that to be possible in this matter. As it is, that doesn't look to be possible at this stage in a formal way, which is infuriating.

Sometimes there have been gaps in information provided by the council, or poorly worded information, or even wrong information posted on facebook by the council. I have been doing my best to be watchful and ask for corrections or better information to be shared where there has been a danger of misunderstanding.

I have been involved in leading campaigns myself, as well as objecting to planning applications, and have maybe become a bit obsessed with the requirement for arguments to be rooted in fact and worded in non-emotional language that ticks boxes for those receiving them. I have made it my business to try to put facts first in this greenbelt issue, and to help supply facts where I have seen them missing, clouded, or accidentally misinterpreted.

I realise that posting anonymously is not good in certain respects. Please let me explain.

I wanted to join the group as a concerned person who might have knowledge to bring to the situation, rather than with the councillor hat on - but I do realise that it is not possible to separate the two entirely.

I realise that it probably looks like a cowardly or dishonest choice not to post under my name. Admins of facebook groups take the important decision of whether or not to allow anonymous posting; I have posted behind that anonymous shield because I thought it would allow me to contribute more freely. When I post on my councillor page, I think twice about every word I type, and often shrink from posting things altogether because I have already imagined negative comments that might appear. Having the chance to post anonymously meant I could speak more freely, as I would in a face to face conversation without worrying about doing things absolutely perfectly in the public gaze, which is what sometimes happens when the councillor hat is on.

Comments I have made have been in the spirit of seeking to address factual uncertainties using the best of my own knowledge (which is not completely infallible, since I am human), and perhaps influence a bit regarding the absolute need for a Local Plan.

I do not want our greenbelt built on. Like Cllr Johnson I believe there is not one of Sheffield's 84 councillors who does want our greenbelt built on. The reality for all of us is that if we are being responsible as councillors, we must continue to demonstrate our commitment to adopting a Local Plan. We have not been given the option at this stage of doing that without some greenbelt release.

My political group - Labour - pushed back on the allocation of sites we were shown. We insisted that more - much more - should be sought in the southwest of the city. Revision of the site allocations brought in only one additional parcel in Lodge Moor. We have found this extremely hard to bear, as our members in the north and southeast of the city articulated so meaningfully at the decision-making Full Council in May.

However, we know that we must press ahead with the Local Plan, or we would be risking 'open season' on building in Sheffield. We have encouraged people to take part in the consultation - and I have been blown away by the speed at which everyone has got organised and researched information to feed into consultation submissions. I know it's against the odds, but it is truly impressive and truly gives me an enormous sense of pride in Sheffielders.

Please try to believe me when I say that choosing to post anonymously has been in the spirit of not wanting to disrupt this vital activity. "Who wants a councillor from the other side of town wading in?" was part of my rationale for doing it this way. The Nolan principles were not out of my mind when I made the choice; but I thought I could contribute more this way.

So I make a humble apology for having got this wrong.

## Screenshots



**Ruth Milsom**

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## **Ruth Milson Follow-On Responses to Community Members Questioning Intent**





**Anonymous member 822**

I can honestly say this has crossed my mind such is my level of distrust in SCC. I've often wondered if they've had someone join the group for the purpose of reading our posts where we share information found and have given advice. How sad is that. Actually posting misinformation is whole other level. It saddens me that there are good councillors out there. Namely our very supportive local councillors I do not and will not have them tarred by the same brush.

2w Like Reply

1 



**Ruth Milsom**

[Anonymous member 822](#) nobody had me join this group, I did it off my own bat - initially to better inform myself about the campaign and what people are experiencing. My name is visible in the list of members, so my joining was transparent enough.

We're often told we're out of touch and that we shouldn't make decisions about things that affect people without putting ourselves in their shoes. So I've put myself in a place where I can see the anger and anxiety, and hopefully empathise better.

When I started to see little bits of

When I started to see little bits of misinformation / misinterpretation getting swept up with all the amazing research that campaigners have been doing, I knew that's not fair. I've looked out for that as proactively as I can, and have requested additional information/clarifications / corrections from the council's comms team where I've thought they're needed to ensure that campaigners aren't sent on wild goose chases.

Every submission in the consultation must stand up on facts.

My choice to post anonymously I can see has upset people. I am very sorry for that.

2w Like Reply

2  



**Anonymous member 822**

🕒 Ruth Milsom can I ask if you have posted any additional information or clarification you have received from the Town Council on this group if not why not. I know you are a Labour Councillor. can I also ask did you vote against the plan. Why would a councillor who represents Crookes/Crosspool want to see what an S35 action group is up to





**Ruth Milsom**

**Anonymous member 822** of course I want to see what is happening in a campaign on a matter that I have to vote on! Councillors are often criticised for being out of touch - and that criticism is often justified. I don't like making decisions that I don't feel informed about. I don't want to be a nodding dog. I want to do my research and be able to debate any matter without wearing blinkers. So seeing and hearing the voices of people who are directly affected is incredibly important to me.

I'm not happy about the decree that Sheffield must provide greenbelt land for development. I'm not happy to have sat in that council chamber and felt I had to come down on the side of progressing the Local Plan. I couldn't see an alternative at that point in time that would have been a responsible action. I argued hard for more of the burden to be allocated to the southwest of the city. In the time available to us, Labour councillors tried very, very hard to achieve this.

I resolved at that council meeting to vote for the Local Plan to progress, but to be as diligent as I could be in making sure campaigners had the information and tools needed to make sound submissions to the consultation.

I voted 'for' on that day because not doing so would have been immensely risky. Stopping the progress of the Local Plan would have risked losing control altogether over where development happens; and/or a much higher housing target of c.51k that would certainly mean vast amounts more of the greenbelt being lost. However much I wanted to make a stand against the planning inspectorate's decree, I knew it wouldn't work doing it that way. The consultation is the thing they are obliged by law to consider.

I know a lot of people will be disappointed in me and other councillors who voted 'for', but we did not do it unthinkingly, and we did not do it without having made our own effort first to spare some of the greenbelt in the north and

of the greenbelt in the north and southeast of the city.

2w Like Reply

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**Anonymous member 822**

● Ruth Milsom I'm sorry but correct me if I'm wrong you don't seem to have answered my first question. Have you ever posted any information in this group that gave information or clarification on matters that may have been of interest ?

2w Like Reply



**Anonymous member 822**

If you felt uninformed you should have done your research before voting but you chose to tow the party line possibly due to pressure from other members. You could have come to the first meeting we had at Newton Hall to see how the community felt but you didn't. Doesn't matter how much you dress it up it's really underhand to enter a group anonymously when your a councillor that voted for the plan. You're right the Labour Party are out of touch with their electorate and I'm sorry but you've just made matters worse. 🙄

2w Like Reply



**Ruth Milsom**

[Anonymous member 822](#) I joined this group before the council vote precisely to learn how people in the community felt. I also read every public question and talked about the issues with my colleagues who represent directly affected wards, before the council vote, so that I would not be ignorant of what residents were saying and the concerns driving the growing campaign.

I didn't enter the group anonymously or intending to post anonymously. My name is visible in the list of members, like everyone else. I didn't even know it was possible to post here anonymously when I joined.

I am sorry about subsequently choosing to comment anonymously, but that was not ever meant to harm the campaign. I believe in this campaign. I believe in citizens' right to participate in decision-making processes.

Sorry once again.

2w Like Reply



**Anonymous member 822**

🗳️ Ruth Milsom but Ruth you still voted for it. 😞 You voted for something you didn't believe in 🙄 You and other Labour MPs can't hide behind "it could be worse" because for S35/S13 it could not be any worse. You could have abstained to show your disapproval like our local Labour councillor did. It's a sorry state of affairs 😞



 Lynda Jackson

Why on earth would you feel the need to create several identities in order to post. If you felt you had something useful for the group why would you not post in your own name? I you thought you were helping, why hide? I'm sorry but this does not wash with me. I doubt many in your area will now trust you.

2w Like Reply

3 



Ruth Milsom

 Lynda Jackson I have never made a habit of posting anonymously before this. What I discovered facebook does is assign a new 'anonymous xxx' number for each thread that you comment on (which isn't that many tbh). I have not intentionally created numerous identities!

I've said that on reflection it probably wasn't the best possible decision to post without my name visible. However, given the degree of venom voiced towards and about councillors by some social media users, I made that choice and I hope a maybe few people can understand it. Sometimes as a citizen as well as a councillor I

a citizen as well as a councillor I just want to be able to stay stuff. I might have judged it wrong, but I did think that my contributions might not be taken at face value by some if posted as a councillor.

I'm sorry for getting this wrong.

2w Like Reply

[REDACTED]

Why not just stand up and be honest!  
Support the people of Sheffield, this only  
proves to me how democracy is being lost  
by the very people who are supposed to  
represent it 😡

2w Like Reply

1 👍



**Ruth Milsom**

Ironically, I was trying to aid the  
smooth course of democracy by  
watching out for instances where  
campaigners were being misled by  
poor communication or missing  
information, so that all the consultation  
responses could be as robustly rooted  
in fact as possible, and none will be  
rejected by the inspectors because of  
misinformation.

The clanger of an error posted by the  
council on its Facebook post about the  
Attercliffe development is an example  
of why I've tried to be watchful. That  
sort of thing just causes unnecessary  
extra upset and anger, and wastes  
people's time and effort.

But I totally accept that taking  
advantage of the group allowing  
anonymous posting was probably a  
poor choice on my part. I'm very sorry  
for that.

[REDACTED]

I bet you didn't vote against the  
development though did you 🤔  
Did you hide behind the bench then too 🤔

2w Like Reply

3 👍



**Ruth Milsom**

[REDACTED] it's on public record  
that I voted for progressing the Local  
Plan and starting the formal public  
consultation on greenbelt sites. Full  
Council happens in public for good  
reason. No hiding.

2w Like Reply

1 😡