

# SMDC Local Plan Examination

Session 8 Matter 8 - Allocations in Leek – Tues Oct 16<sup>th</sup> at 9.30 am

3. Land at the Mount (DSL2) **3.1 Implications of the Mount being used DAILY by up to 200 local people is being overlooked by the Planners. i.e. It is a valuable AMENITY and recreational resource and has been for many decades.**

Building 345 houses with a school along Mount Road will ruin the beautiful, recreational area that anyone living in Leek knows as “The Mount”. Mount Road does NOT need upgrading at the moment. The proposal to build 95 houses in LE128 is unacceptable as the Mount is an important open space close to the town centre and as you walk along Mount Road towards the north end (Buxton Rd) you get the views both before Pike Hall Farm and then again after you have passed the copse – right over to the Cloud hill, the Roaches, Shutlingslow Hill in Cheshire and across towards Morridge ridge. **360 degrees of views as you walk/cycle/jog along the majority of Mount Road.**

This is an amenity which has been completely underestimated and its value not understood or EVEN CONSIDERED by the Planners. With 95 houses in LE128 there will be NO VIEW.

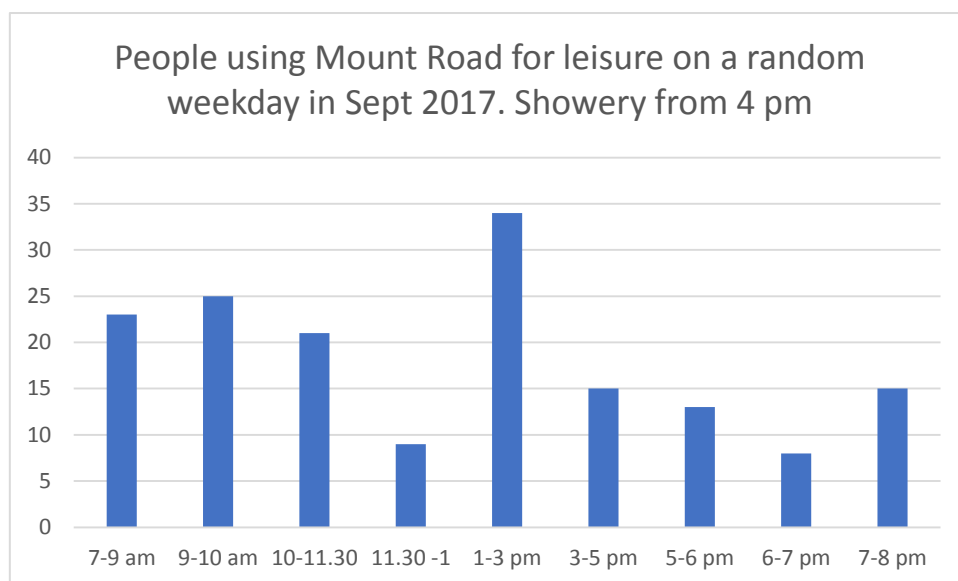
1. SMDC promote a self guided 9 mile walk called Leek Landscapes around the perimeter of Leek and you walk along Mount Road for the views across the town below and across to the Roaches and Shutlingsloe hill in the distance. Quoting from the leaflet – “the route passes mostly through attractive farmland and offers many interesting views of Leek and its setting. Leek reflects close ties with the landscape”.
2. The eastern side of Leek is short of decent paths/walkways/quiet roads/green space/parks to exercise daily. Fresh air is what people want when going for a walk/cycle/jog. Views too help de-stress people in their busy lives. People living nearby might only have an odd half an hour to take this important outing. Many prefer to do this activity rather than get in a car to go to a gym for instance.
3. We have overlooked LE128 for 42 years and it is a green field used by a farmer to graze his sheep or cows ever since then and before probably. The town boundary runs along the bottom of the gardens of houses built in the early 1970s. This town boundary that has been in place for 40 years or more protected “the Mount” from being built on but with SMDC’s intention to move the boundary out onto Mount Road where it passes the copse then they give themselves the go ahead to build houses in LE128. Yet the boundary at the southern end of Mount Road is NOT going to be moved outwards away from the town. In the 2015 proposals for new housing in two other fields at the south end of Mount Rd i.e. LE069 and LE127 were thrown out and protection is afforded them in the future with the town boundary staying at the bottom of the gardens of existing houses. Why this inconsistency?

The WHOLE of the section of Mount Road between the top of Kniveden Lane and the southern end where there is a T junction taking you over the bridge to Lowe Hill or right down Mount Rd to meet the Ashbourne Rd is an AMENITY that must be protected.

**To demonstrate to planners that Mount Road is used regularly 24/7 as they say! locals have carried out 2 surveys demonstrating the constant use of the road for recreation.**

A local resident carried out a head count on Sun 8th May 2016 between 0700 and 2000 and counted a total of 217 people using the road for recreation; 190 walkers (44 with dogs, 8 with prams), 12 cyclists, 12 joggers and 3 horse riders. These were not in organised groups but simply people enjoying the exercise, the views and the fresh air in a safe and sustainable way – no need to get the car out.

In a more recent survey in Sept 2107 a group of 8 concerned local residents working on a rota asked each person using Mount Road at that time, which street they lived in, how often they used Mount Road for exercise and let them make comments. Here are just some - “lovely views & therapy”, “have walked here since a child”, “perfect quiet route”, “less traffic, greenery, unspoilt”, “a lifeline for me since chemo, it’s given me strength looking at the views”, “exercise, well-being”, “local, good distance”, “safe place to walk in retirement”, “easy walk in a beautiful setting”, “safe walk in the country but not far away” etc etc. Some even comment they walk twice daily along the Mount.



Graph showing the constant use of this minor country road by locals – some of whom come from central Leek or even Westwood side of Leek as well as more local roads.

**163 people** were recorded as using Mount Road for recreation on this particular day.

6% were joggers, 5% were cyclists and the rest were walkers – some with dogs and some with pushchairs. It is used before 7 am and after 8 pm as nearby residents can testify.

**The questionnaires are available for inspectors/planners to see and I will take them to the meeting on Oct 16<sup>th</sup>.**

Most dog walkers prefer using the 'waste land' i.e. LE140 at the top of Leek High School – where the proposed new 1<sup>st</sup> school is to be built along with new housing so that area will be lost to them. People regularly drive to this area to walk their dogs. Where will they go when LE140 is developed as planned?

The road will be upgraded and act as a short cut/by-pass between Ashbourne Road and Buxton Road. The Highways Department are not concerned about safety on Mount Road at the present time – only if hundreds of houses and a school are built there!

Most of the occupants of these new houses will no doubt be adding to the increasing road congestion in Leek by travelling to the Potteries or along the Macclesfield Road as there are few jobs in Leek to be had. Very few people would walk/take a bus into town or to visit the 2 large supermarkets which are on the west side of town. It is not an expanding town and job opportunities have reduced with the takeover of Britannia Building Society and loss of jobs as a result. Biddulph could have more new houses as it is quicker to access the M6 from there. **No by-pass in Leek and no railway station and at least 40 minutes to get to the M6.**

Why should Leek East be forced to have this many new houses built when there are old mills to be adapted and brown field sites in Leek? **Two areas already have planning permission but no builders are rushing to build.** Sainsbury's promised 60 houses opposite their store 6 years or so ago. Nothing happening here.

Why not build houses and a new school next to Churnet View Middle school and use the 'Nature Reserve' (i.e. overgrown old tip) next to the pleasant small development at Nightingale Gardens.

**No provision is being made for recreation areas for the 345 houses planned on the Mount. Mount Road itself will not be used so much if at all as an amenity.**

A children's playground has not been factored in nor an area for dog walkers.

**Removing LE128 from this outrageous plan would be showing some give and take – not just TAKE by greedy land owners. The town boundary should not be altered from the 1998 local plan; it was placed there for a reason after all.**

**Once the green fields are dug up and houses built there is no turning back...and the once iconic MOUNT area of "the Queen of the Moorlands" Leek will be gone forever.**