

Grounds of Appeal for a Proposed Residential Development for 22no. dwellings and associated landscaping at Land West of the Grove, New Ridley Road, Stocksfield

As the Planning Decision Notice was issued by Northumberland County Council on 16th August, the appeal process will follow the planning appeal procedure which was applied at the time of decision, rather than revised planning appeal process (implemented by the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No.2) Order 2013) which came into force on 1st October 2013. As such, the following document will set out the Grounds for Appeal for the proposed residential development at New Ridley Road, Stocksfield.

Reasons for Refusal

- 1. The proposed development, by virtue of its scale and location within the Green Belt does not constitute "limited" infilling in New Ridley of "limited" affordable housing for local community needs, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposed development is therefore inappropriate development within the Green Belt for which the applicant has not demonstrated that very special circumstances exist. The proposal is therefore contrary to the provisions of the NPPF in this respect, and also the provisions of Local Plan Policies NE7 and H23 which are considered to align in principal with the provisions of the NPPF.*
- 2. The proposed development, by virtue of its location within a smaller settlement poorly served by services/facilities and which has limited access to the public transport network, is not a sustainable location for new housing development, contrary to the sustainability objectives of the NPPF and to the provisions of Core Strategy Policies GD1, H1 H3 and H7 and Local Plan Policy H23.*
- 3. The proposed development, by virtue of its internal highway layout as shown on the submitted amended plans would encourage the parking of vehicles on the public highway in a location which would adversely affect both the visibility splays from the proposed development and visibility in a forward direction for vehicles passing the development necessary for highway safety and would also interrupt the free flow of traffic and prejudice the safety of all road users of the highway, contrary to the provisions of Core Strategy Policy GD4 and Local Plan Policy GD4.*
- 4. There is a deficiency in the amount of outdoor sports facilities across the former District area of Tynedale. There is not appropriate provision in place to secure a contribution towards outdoor sports facilities arising from this development as required by the Council's Supplementary Planning Document "New Housing: Planning Obligations for Sport and Play Facilities" and the proposal is therefore contrary to the provisions of Core Strategy Policy GD6 and Local Plan Policy LR11 and the Supplementary Planning Document "New Housing: Planning Obligations for Sport and Play Facilities".*

Grounds for Appeal

1 - The development represents a sustainable location for new development, when considered in the context of Stocksfield and New Ridley as closely allied settlements and is in fact in a similar situation to other recent approvals within Central and West Northumberland

The current Stocksfield Proposals Map from the current Local Plan shows the edge of the village of Stocksfield being effectively designated by the tight Green Belt boundary that is draw around it. Using this Green Belt boundary line, and the eastern edge of the built environment of New Ridley, there is a distance

of approximately 155m. Given the precedent set by both the Local Authority, (Planning Application 13/01103/FUL – Humshaugh and Chollerford) and the Planning Inspectorate (Appeal Reference APP/P2935/A/2176272 – Medburn and Ponteland) on taking into account the proximity of neighbouring town or villages when considering planning applications for residential development, we feel it is inappropriate to treat New Ridley and Stocksfield separately when reviewing this application for affordable housing, and define all development within New Ridley as unsustainable.

In both of the above cases, the proximity of the two settlements, and the distance taken to travel between them via means other than private car, have been taken into account, and considered acceptable and sustainable locations for residential development. We therefore feel that this appeal should be considered in the same manner. In terms of the Medburn appeal, the Inspector was of the opinion that the services within Ponteland were within an adequate cycling distance to be deemed sustainable. The nearest shop to Medburn which supplies day to day provisions is an approximate 15 minute cycle ride away. This must be considered against the approximate 11 minute cycle ride it would take to get from this appeal site to an equivalent service in Stocksfield.

A review of the local services which are situated within Stocksfield and New Ridley shows there are more than an adequate number to provide a service to local residents. The services include:

- Train Station;
- Petrol Station;
- Doctors Surgery;
- Spar Convenience store;
- Boots Pharmacy;
- Stocksfield Institute Community Association;
- Stocksfield Golf Club;
- Stocksfield Cricket Club
- Stocksfield Sportsfields; and
- Dr Syntax Inn.

These services provide a good range of day to day services, public transport and sport and play facilities. Due to the layout of the two villages, there are many residents within Stocksfield who are actually closer to the services within New Ridley than they are within Stocksfield. With consideration to our justification for both villages to be considered together in the determining of this appeal, we feel that the proposed development site would be more than adequately served by local amenities.

2 - The scheme can be rightly considered as providing “limited affordable housing” when considered in the context of Stocksfield and New Ridley

There is no doubting that the application site lies within the Green Belt, as the village of New Ridley is washed over by the Green Belt designation within the current development plan for Northumberland. However, following the belief that the appeal site should be considered in the wider aspect of Stocksfield, we consider that this proposed development for affordable housing in New Ridley does meet the exceptional circumstances criteria stated within the National Planning Policy Framework whereby “limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan” are acceptable.

In this instance the relevant Local Plan Policy would be Policies NE7 and H23 of the Tynedale Local Plan. Although out of date, they are saved policies, and conform with the NPPF. These Policies and the NPPF

confirm the acceptability of providing limited affordable housing can be located within settlements with adequate range of services and facilities, where it is demonstrated there is an overriding local need that cannot be met by any other means. That local need is set out in ground of appeal 3. Figures from the 2011 Census show that there are approximately 1174 houses in Stocksfield and New Ridley. The proposed development of 22 affordable dwellings will therefore equate to an increase of only 1.9% of the overall dwellings, and would clearly constitute 'limited affordable housing'.

3) – There is a proven under-supply of both market housing and affordable housing across Central Northumberland and that there are no alternative sites which are in the public domain which are available to meet the affordable housing needs within Stocksfield and New Ridley

There is an identified need within Northumberland for affordable housing, and Northumberland County Council do not currently have an identified 5 year housing land supply. The provision of 22 affordable dwellings within the settlements of New Ridley and Stocksfield would help meet these needs, and should be considered as limited infill of affordable homes, in relation to the NPPF policies. A review of the most recent Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (October 2013) shows that there are no other available sites within New Ridley or Stocksfield to provide this level of affordable housing.

The latest Northumberland Housing Needs Assessment (Amended July 2013) document states that, across the County, there is a requirement for 242 affordable units per annum, and this proposed development would equate to 9% of this figure. It was agreed with the Council Housing Enabling Officer that the types, sizes and tenures of the proposed development would be welcomed in the area. It was agreed that an appropriately worded Section 106 agreement would confirm that that priority would be given to local residents with a strong local connection to the Broomley and Stocksfield parish.

It is also noted that affordable housing was a key issue within the 2009 Parish Plan for Broomley and Stocksfield and at that point, there had been no affordable housing provided in the parish since 1997. This will be covered in more detail in the main appeal statement.

4) – Detailed matters such as highways were capable of being resolved through minor adjustments to layout and landscaping and potentially incorporation of traffic regulation orders on the main road.

The Council's Highways team that the location of development, level of parking provision, visibility splays and highways width are all acceptable. It is acknowledged that there are concerns that the proposed layout may lead to some-one street (or on-verge) parking along New Ridley Road. Work has continued on the scheme, and through minor changes to the proposed layout, it is proposed that these potential on-street/on-verge issues can be resolved in a manner that will not be detrimental to the internal layout of the scheme or unduly impact on the visibility splay and frontage on New Ridley Road.

5) – The applicant is committed to the provision of informal open space within the development and an area of this land could easily be given over to formal play space and details provided by way of a condition. Off-site sports provision could have also been secured by way of a s106 agreement, or an opportunity provided to negotiate provision based on the viability of the scheme.

It had been considered acceptable by the Case Officer that, due to the dwelling type and housing mix, a reduced figure of 288m² of open space would be appropriate for the proposed development. Although the Planning Obligations for Sport and Play Supplementary Planning Document requires 400m² for a scheme of this size, the Case Officer agreed that demanding this figure would be unacceptable. The applicant had agreed with the Local Authority that as part of the Section 106 agreement, a financial contribution could be used to effectively 'top up' the proposed on-site provision in order to meet the requirements of the SPD, and that a suitable worded condition would ensure an acceptable split of on-site open space and play provision. The proposed scheme would therefore be in accordance with the SPD and local and national policy.