

Professor P W Roberts OBE

Kirklees Local Plan Examination -- Stage 1 Hearings.

Matter 4 – Housing Land Supply and Delivery or Matter 5-Other Housing Development.

Statement by Professor P W Roberts MRTPI, OBE on behalf of Kirkheaton Future – the Steering Group for the Kirkheaton Neighbourhood Plan.

I am a Chartered Member of the RTPI and have held the Chair of Planning at various UK universities, including Liverpool, Leeds and Dundee. I have 46 years' experience chiefly, as a strategic planner, in policy and practice, including roles with UK central and local government and specialist agencies (such as the Homes and Communities Agency). I am currently Chair of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Co-Chair of the Rural Housing Network which reports to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

With regard to the Kirklees Local Plan and matters of housing land supply and delivery, I wish to make 3 observations.

1. Although the overall housing requirement identified for Kirklees seems reasonable, there is little detailed consideration of particular local issues related to the composition, evolution and distribution of demand, and the best way to ensure the effective implementation of a best practice 'active stock management' approach. Such an approach is at the heart of good place shaping and place management, and seeks to ensure that the right homes are delivered to the right people at the right time and in the right place. For individual settlements this means that a detailed examination of demographic, social and economic factors should be interwoven with the spatial characteristics of a place. Such an approach is absent in the Plan.
2. While not wanting to dispute the overall estimate of housing need for Kirkheaton, the translation of need into supply and allocations is overly crude and ignores the drivers of demand. Equally, the resulting indicative site allocations contained in Appendix 3 ignore the dominant spatial characteristics of the village and only deal with large sites. The draft Neighbourhood Plan (which is now at an advanced stage) is based on a more sophisticated and detailed analysis of demand and, as such, it provides a much stronger basis for future planning and housing land allocations. The policies in the draft Neighbourhood Plan represent the marriage of detailed analysis with an 'active stock management' approach, which reflects the real current and future needs of the population; chiefly affordable housing for the young and elderly sections of the population, especially housing that provides extra care facilities.
3. As a consequence, it is argued that much greater emphasis should be given in the Plan to the use of the smaller sites within the existing built-up area of the village, that emphasis should be placed on the use of brownfield and other small sites, within the existing built-up area, that phasing policies should be introduced, and that 2 proposed sites should be removed from the list of allocations and replaced by smaller sites and site intensification of use. The two sites to be removed are

- (a) H737 – this is a site outwith the existing built-up area; it is of strategic landscape and ecological value; it is adjacent to an important historic route way; it is proposed for an alternative use in the draft Neighbourhood Plan; and is a site that would create major difficulties in terms of infrastructure availability.
- (b) H3350 -- this site is outwith the existing built-up area and is of high landscape value.