

KIRKLEES LOCAL PLAN EiP - STAGE 4 HEARINGS

February / March 2018

SUBMISSION

Matter: 41

Site: Land at Penistone Road, Birdsdedge

Number: H177 (Rejected)

Issue – Are the proposed housing, mixed use and safeguarded land allocations in Denby Dale justified, effective, developable/deliverable and in line with national policy?

This allocation of these sites is not considered to be justified or effective for the following reasons -

As part of the EiP, in October 2017, the Inspector requested that the Council provide more information as to “why certain settlements are identified for growth whilst others will accommodate less, particularly within the Kirklees Rural Area. It also appears that all site options which scored well in the technical appraisal and Sustainability Appraisal work have been allocated, and as such it is unclear how settlement function/form was taken into account”.

It is held that the Council’s response to the Inspector’s request does not adequately deal with her concerns in terms of the distribution of growth across the district, and in particular the Kirklees Rural Area, as the response appears to merely seek to reinforce existing methodologies and conclusions. No consideration appears to have been given to the impact of this strategy with respect to the consequential highly limited growth potential of many Kirklees Rural settlements, many of whom, such as Birdsdge, are reasonably sustainable and capable of accommodating growth.

The concentration of proposed development in and around existing larger urban centres over the period of the Plan will, it is argued, lead to the deterioration of the existing sustainability of smaller rural villages and settlements, contributing to the further loss of local jobs, services, facilities, schools, and public transport links. It is contended that this would not be in the interests of good planning, as it will create dormitory villages or settlements with increasingly ageing populations which will be almost totally reliant on the existing larger urban and rural settlements for their needs.

It is therefore held that Birdsedge could reasonably be considered for growth. In respect of the above, this rejected site is considered to be in a reasonably sustainable location and it would appear that the Council has not properly or adequately considered the settlement function / form of the village.

The rejected site lies in the village of Birdsedge, approximately five miles from the centre of Holmfirth, three miles from the centre of Denby Dale, and one and a half miles from the centre of Shepley.

Birdsedge is held to be a settlement in a sustainable location and is also considered to be a settlement that is capable of accommodating growth. Evidence of the village's sustainability is found in a recent appeal decision for a dismissed appeal at Green Lane, High Flatts, some one and a half miles further away from Holmfirth etc than the rejected site (APP/Z4718/W/17/3180123). The Inspector found (at para 22) that -

"The development would be close to a bus stop on Penistone Road with hourly bus services from early morning to evening on Mondays to Saturdays. The bus service connects to the nearby settlements of Ingbirchworth, Birds Edge, Upper Denby and Denby Dale which have a range of services and facilities including a train station in Denby Dale. The school in Birds Edge is within walking distance along a pavement that runs along one side of Penistone Road. Occupants of the development would not have to travel far to access local services and facilities and would not be wholly reliant on the private motor car. This other consideration thus carries moderate weight in favour of development".

As such, this site is considered to be even more sustainably located, being closer to the services and facilities of Denby Dale and Shepley.

The village and settlement of Birdsedge has the following employment premises, service, and facilities -

- Hinchliffe Mill, Birdsedge
- CG Hitchens Plant, Birdsedge Lane
- Blackthorne Security, Birdsedge
- Yorkshire Water - Rushy Wood site is used as a quick response depot for Balfour Beatty
- PJD Services, Birdsedge
- Susan Brown Studio Design, Art Gallery, The Crown, Birdsedge
- Daytona Stage Hire, Cross Pipes, Birdsedge
- Park Head Recording Studio, Birdsedge
- Cool Water Direct Ltd., New House Farm, Birdsedge
- Birdsedge Plant and Tool Hire, Birdsedge

There are also numerous small business registered in the village with people working from home etc. There is a private airfield and the village has superfast broadband.

Public transport links in the village are found at six bus stops on Penistone Road for services 81/82/83 to destinations as per the Inspector's appeal decision letter above and a bus takes children to nearby Shelley High School. There are more public transport options from the Sovereign Crossroads (half a mile to the north) and Cumberworth (one mile to the north-east).

Within walking distance of half a mile of the site are -

- A Co op food store at the Sovereign Crossroads, along with petrol and banking/cash dispenser facilities
- Numerous businesses, located at the Sovereign Business Park, Barnsley Road, Sovereign Crossroads
- Numerous businesses at the Appleton Business Park on Holmfirth Road, Sovereign Crossroads
- The Thai restaurant, cafe, massage and spa and gift shop at High Flatts

The local football club, Cumberworth FC plays in the village and has a building with cooking facilities, toilets and changing rooms, and pitches for senior and junior teams. This is located off Park Lane, Birdsedge.

The Village Hall has a licensed bar. There is also a large recreation ground with play equipment, a Wesleyan Chapel, and an under-subscribed village primary school - Birdsedge First School (see below). A Health Centre, pharmacies, dentist, and the Bridge House Clinic are located in Shepley.

Therefore, it can be seen that Birdsedge is in a sustainable location and has numerous employment sites, services and facilities close by or within easy walking distance along well-lit footways or by public transport.

By dismissing the village as a settlement and therefore not considering it for accommodating growth, the Council has not adequately assessed the function or form of the village. As stated above, it is contended that this lack of assessment of smaller settlements would not be in the interests of good planning, as it will create dormitory villages or settlements with increasingly ageing populations which will be almost totally reliant on the existing larger urban and rural settlements for their needs.

Evidence of this stagnation already exists in Birdsedge. There are currently 152 residential properties within Birdsedge housing an adult population of 271 persons. Of these adults, 47 (17%) are between the ages of 18 and 40 and 25 of these adults (9%) are registered as living with family. However, there are 114 adults (42%) living in the village over the age of 60 and 110 adults (41%) between the ages of 40 and 60. It is contended that this demography illustrates an ageing village population with far fewer younger people than could be expected given the size of the population. Unfortunately, no figures were available for the number of children within the village but, given the demographic above, it is unlikely that numbers will be high.

The type, tenure, and affordability of existing properties in the village does not, it is held, allow for young people with families to either remain or come into the village. Out of the 152 properties, 26 are rented (as seen below) from the Council and 16 privately. House types are shown below -

1 apartment

1 annex

10 Council bungalows (originally 16 - 6 sold through Right to Buy)

52 privately owned bungalows

22 semi-detached houses

12 detached houses

54 terraced houses or houses formed from farm building conversions

Therefore, in terms of “family housing”, which could reasonably be expected to be semi-detached or detached houses, only 34 of the 152 properties (22%) are suitable for “family housing”.

It is also contended that the “affordability” of housing and the high level of house prices within the village mitigates against young families moving in or remaining in the village. The average price for property in HD8 8XP (Birdsedge) stood at £227,851 in January 2018. This is a rise of 1.36% in the last three months (since October 2017) and rise of 2.41% since 12 months ago. In terms of property types, flats in HD8 8XP sold for an average of £127,511 and terraced houses for £173,988. Larger properties have a much higher average value - for example the Park Lane average value is £347,000 and on Birdsedge Lane the average value is £255,000.

It would therefore appear from the information set out above on demographics, house types, tenures, and average house values that the village will stagnate and simply become a dormitory village for nearby urban areas unless further affordable development is provided within the village. Birdsedge needs new “life” which can only be realised by planned growth to provide family housing at an affordable price to allow for young people with families to either remain in Birdsedge or to come into the area.

Such growth is considered vital if local employment, services, and facilities are to survive. This is critically important with respect to the local primary school, Birdsedge First School. The school has seen a fall over the past seven years in terms of its PAN (currently 90 but now only 78 pupils on the school roll). In addition, pupils have increasingly come from a wider catchment area than Birdsedge / High Flatts - increasingly, pupils are being drawn from areas outside the catchment area of the school, which would appear to be unsustainable giving the gradual decline in overall numbers of pupils.

This evidence leads to the conclusion that there are not enough children within the village to sustain the school. The provision of new family housing

would therefore likely boost significantly the numbers of children living within the village and thus attending the local school.

Should the Inspector be minded to support the allocation of this site for housing, given the arguments set out above, then the Inspector may also be willing to consider that this site, and indeed other sites in similar villages that could be identified to support the planned growth of smaller rural settlements, could accommodate a higher level of affordable housing provision to meet local and specified housing needs. It may be appropriate that sites such as this are subject to an affordable housing policy to provide, say, 40% affordable housing, which is twice the amount sought by the current affordable housing policy. In this way, planned growth can be accommodated which met the specific housing needs of the settlements and villages to allow for affordable family housing to be provided to meet local needs.

Finally, it should be noted that the allocation of this site is fully supported by local councillors, who want to see settlements such as Birdsgrove thrive and develop for the benefit of the local community.

General

- a) ***Is the site suitable for the proposed use? In the case of housing and mixed-use allocations, does the Plan provide clear guidance on requirements and constraints, and seek appropriate mitigation measures?***

The site is suitable for a residential use and constraints have been identified that can be overcome. An indicative site layout has been prepared and this is attached as Appendix A.

The indicative layout shows a mix of two, three and four bedroom houses which would be suitable for families. The site has no constraints that cannot be overcome. Access to and from the site will be directly onto Penistone Road through an existing access and sight lines are good - it should be noted that the current speed limit on Penistone Road of 40mph is to be reduced shortly to 30mph, further ensuring that the site can be accessed adequately with no adverse impact on highway safety.

Drainage connections can be made directly into Penistone Road and trees under a Tree Preservation Order on the southern boundary will be protected from development. There are no ecological, flood risk, or contamination constraints. Landscaping will be provided to ensure that the site transitions effectively to the green belt on the western boundary.

b) Is the indicative site capacity appropriate, taking account of constraints and the provision of necessary infrastructure? For mixed use sites - how was the mix/proportion of uses determined?

The indicative capacity of the site represents a density of 30 dwelling per hectare, which is held to be consistent with other developments and proposed allocations elsewhere in the Plan.

c) Is the site available and deliverable in the timescales envisaged?

The landowners have indicated their willingness to sell and so, given the lack of constraints on the site, the site would be available and deliverable in the timescales envisaged.

d) For sites currently in the Green Belt - what effect would the proposed boundary change and allocation have on the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it? Are there exceptional circumstances that justify altering the Green Belt?

A proposed boundary change and allocation of this green belt site would extend the existing settlement to the west and therefore not extend the village along the Penistone Road axis. There are no potential sites for development in Birdsedge that are not in the green belt, and so there is no option but to release this site if the argument of planned growth of the village is accepted. No other proposed sites within the village are preferable to this site, as it lies in the heart of the village near to the existing school and close to services and facilities in locations to the north and east.

Therefore, it is contended that the exceptional circumstances that justify altering the green belt have been set out in the arguments above, namely to allow for planned growth of the settlement by providing affordable family accommodation which would also sustain the local school.

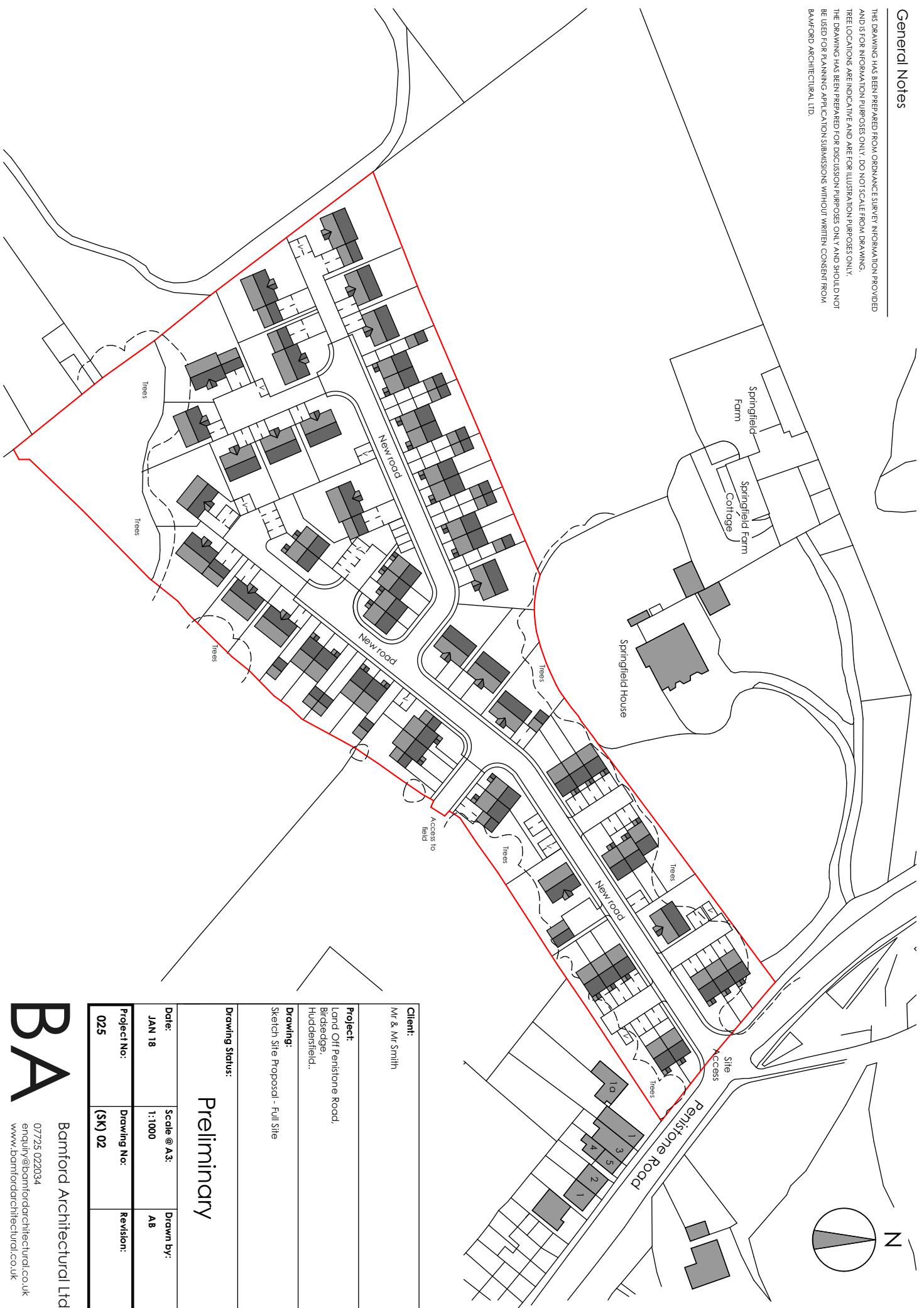
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January 2018

General Notes

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