

About the application

Application number: 2022/92406	
What is the application for?:	Erection of 10 affordable dwellings, with access from Chapelgate and associated
Address of the site or building:	Land Adj, 67, Chapelgate, Scholes, Holmfirth, HD9 1SX
Postcode:	HD9 3BW

User comments

Type of comment: An objection	
Do you wish your comments to be published on the website anonymously?	Yes
COMMENT 1 It is very difficult for the layman to ascertain what is 'new' about the updated plans etc. However, from reviewing these, these do not appear to overcome the many objections that have already been raised. I will therefore repeat my concerns below. However, prior to doing that, it is disappointing to see that supporters of this proposal feel the need to use terms around like 'shrill' and 'NIMBYISM' (and using these terms in comments submitted on this portal) when referring to those people who are raising genuine and serious concerns about this proposal and the process that has been followed here. I note there is no 'name calling' in the opposite direction. There is also a deeper concern around the Land Charity's involvement here (funding the developer's pre-application costs etc.). This land was gifted to the Parish Council for the local community's benefit and they in turn, passed this to the ownership of the HVLC. This is an unelected body and is not accountable to the public (I.e. they can't be voted out of office) and not subject to the same level of scrutiny. This development really is not for the local community's benefits at all but will only benefit select individuals, so it is questionable whether the Charity is in fact acting in accordance with its aims/stated purpose here. Additionally, no consultation has been carried out by the HVLC with the local community about what they would like to see here (which interestingly, I have noticed this week the HVLC is NOW doing in respect of land over Netherthong way...) The "consultation" carried out was already after the HVLC had teamed up with EcoHolmes (the supporting letter from the chair of the HVLC confirms this) and was always in terms of 'what sort of housing shall we build here' and not along the lines of what other uses could this land be used for. My concerns (raised last year) are as follows: Greenbelt Land and 'local need'	

This land is greenbelt land. Under the NPPF, the Council should regard the development of greenbelt land as inappropriate. Planning permission can only be granted on this site if the developer can show that the scale of unmet need for affordable housing in the local (Scholes) community means that a rural exception can be made for this site

I cannot see that the evidence supplied by the developer is sufficient robust to prove beyond doubt that this 'exceptional need' has been met in the Scholes area and I would question the validity of some of the findings in the report.

The Housing Needs Survey produced by arc4 (Feb 2022) is unintelligible for an 'ordinary' person to understand. This puts local residents who object to these proposals at a disadvantage. If they could afford to raise the funds to pay for a similar report, I am sure they could obtain one that concluded that there is insufficient need to justify building on this greenbelt site. I note from a survey issued to 3000, there were only 156 responses (around 5%) and of those, only 88 responses came from those in the Scholes area. With such a low response, this does not appear to robustly reflect the views and needs of the people of Scholes. The report seems to acknowledge this when it speaks about the accuracy of its findings.

I also note that various conclusions are 'extrapolated' due to the number of people who did not respond! It therefore seems that the report's author can simply make up the numbers as they go along to ensure they fit the brief they are paid to fulfil (in this case, to conclude the rural exception is justified). These findings are therefore spurious.

It is extremely precarious for Planning Committee to rely on such a report to justify that something as significant as the rural exception has been proven. Kirklees Local Plan Policy (LP11) states this exceptional need must be 'robustly evidenced.... particularly for those who work locally'. Due to the points noted above, I would challenge that the needs of local people have been 'robustly evidenced' as required. They have merely been cooked up by 'extrapolating' figures to suit the desired outcome the developer wants.

It is apparent from information on the developer's own website that after the first round of rentals, there will only be a requirement that 50% of the tenants have a local connection. This therefore means that the development will not meet the affordable housing needs of the Scholes BAU in perpetuity. LP11 also states that the robust evidence should include parish and settlement assessments. As noted above, the response from the people of Scholes to the local survey was tiny. This does not appear to provide the 'robust evidence' needed to meet this high threshold. For these reasons, I cannot see how the planning committee can grant this application, even in principle.

Even with 50% of the initial tenants being required to have a 'local connection' it is unclear how the developer or the Housing Association will be able to ensure that these homes will be offered to people of Scholes and the immediate surrounding area more so than the wider Kirklees area. It seems incongruous that they can apply to build on Greenbelt land because there's an exceptional need for this in the Scholes BAU but then not have a plan in place to ensure that it's the people in need in this specific area

that will benefit from these houses. The developer appears unable to answer this question sufficiently.

I have more concerns but not enough room to write here, so will enter a further objection...