Stocksmoor is a picturesque and tranquil hamlet, reminiscent of a different era, where sheep graze in fields with boundaries defined by dry local stone walls. Fruit trees looked after by the thriving Village Association line two entrances to the village. Cyclists, walkers many with dogs, and horse riders are a daily feature of life in Stocksmoor. With a nod towards the quarrying history three huge local stone village signs proudly announce Stocksmoor. A late 17th/early 18th century Guidepost (Stoop) fashioned out of local stone is located at the junction of Stocks Moor Road and Cross Lane. A double water local stone trough bears the carved out date of 1815 and the coping stones to the Stocks Moor Railway bridge measure a impressive five by two feet.

The proposed estate of 46 bland, boxy houses and 4 flats does not protect and certainly do not enhance the history of the pretty rural hamlet of Stocksmoor with its rich farming and quarrying heritage. Although the proposed site is outside of the greenbelt (as a result of downgrading in Kirklees Council's Local Plan 1) the farmer successfully grows and harvests hay at least 2/3 times a year and grazes sheep in winter. The last grass was harvested on Friday 7th June with what appeared, as in previous harvests, to be a bountiful yield. This does not reflect the definition of a category listing of Grade 4 agricultural land that is no longer worthy of farming. If it is not worthy of farming, the question has to be asked, why is it still being farmed?

The field, the growing of the crops, dry stone boundary walls and hedgerows provides a valuable habitat for hunting, feeding, breeding and homing animals. Hedgerows provide food for diverse pollinators throughout the year when flowers are scarce. The field, trees, the hedgerows and gardens adjacent to the proposed site are havens for small birds such as robins, jays, goldfinches, blackbirds, as well as for larger birds including buzzards, kestrels, barn and tawny owls, woodpeckers, sparrow hawks, pheasants and ducks. The negative impact on biodiversity is incalculable, on-site building works will impact the natural eco system by disturbing, even removing, sources of protection, shelter and food that wildlife needs to survive. Natural habitats for wild animals and birds will be destroyed and breeding behaviours impacted with permanent resultant displacement. An often forgotten part of this bio diverse life cycle is sub surface dwellers such as moles, foxes, stoats, and mice that will lose their homes and the established corridors they use to traverse the field embankment and gardens. The ancient woodland alongside the building site will be impacted by air, light and water pollution. Despite all this devastation Newett in their Design and Access statement purport that there is an:-

Opportunity to incorporate landscape features and planting to achieve a biodiversity net gain.

Natural flood defences will be overloaded. The proposed housing estate will create an impenetrable barrier preventing the dissipation of water and the runoff will need to be managed so that it does not run and flood the Station Road gardens. Stocksmoor is frequently overwhelmed by water cascading down the main roads and pavements before working its way into Thunderbridge. The existing drains are unable to cope with the volume of water. Dam Hill is often flooded with the road being under water and road grates lifted by the force of the water with resultant spillage into local becks.

Newett's Design and Access Statement dated May 2024 that supports their housing development plan submitted to Kirklees Council on 30 April 2024 and gives their interpretation of the guidance, albeit with inaccuracies and showing a lack of understanding:

'Understanding the place - para 2:-

> *'Historically, the choice of building materials reflects what would have been available locally. The predominant material palette in Stocksmoor is stone, both artificial and natural, there are a few occurrences of red brick and several rendered buildings which add variety* to the streetscape.'

West Yorkshire Geology Trust's agree with the availability locally of natural stone and provide a local perspective and its importance:-

> *'The Greenmoor Rock and the Grenoside Sandstones are thick, resistant beds of sandstone which form many gently sloping **plateaux** on the east side of the Huddersfield area, including the slopes on which Shepley and **Stocksmoor** stand. The **Greenmoor Rock** and the **Grenoside Sandstone** are still quarried near the Sovereign, Shepley, but there were many small quarries throughout the whole area for local buildings. Any waste rock would have been used for field walls.'*

The proposed site is in close proximity to the old Sun Side Quarry, recognised as being of historical value by highlighting a Kirkburton Parish Walk that goes to, the appropriately named, Stone Wood, drawing attention to a large abandoned Greenmoor sandstone quarry in the centre of this ancient wood.

Pre planning guidance is clear:

> *the site is identified as being within a sensitive location bordering green belt. As such development would need to be sympathetic to the surrounding landscape.*

Principle 13 of the pre planning advice further clarifies:

> *'Applicants should show how different materials which are prevalent in the vicinity of the site have been taken into account in the proposal. Consider the use of locally prevalent materials and finishing of buildings to reflect the character of the area.'*

In fact, in contrast to the proposed house designs the majority of existing homes in Stocksmoor are of individual design, interesting, aesthetically pleasing and built of natural stone not the artificial stone or red brick as put forward by Newett. A walk around the village highlights the varied designs and materials used and the many inaccuracies in the Design and Access statement: –

Shepley Road, Natural stone, stone tile roof, stone bungalow concrete tiles, brown brick grey/brown roofs, artificial stone grey slate roof. Some dry stone walls. **Norton Terrace**, Natural stone, natural slate roofs, mixture of hipped and gabled roofs, some red ridge tiles. Dry stone wall boundaries and some remaining tall stone gate posts. **Stocks Moor Road**, mix of artificial and natural stone, boundary walls all local stone mostly dry stone and all the way down Stocks Moor Road. Railway Bridge is of stone. Dry stone walls around the perimeter of the field in front of the Village Hall. Field boundaries mainly dry stone wall. Stocks Moor Bridge is a larger type of natural stone. **Derwin Avenue**, Mix of brick and stone some dry stone boundary walls **Crangle Fields**, Artificial stone brown tile roofs **Station Road,** Local natural stone, local stone roof, natural stone, grey slate roof x two, semi detached stone houses hipped roofs x two, traditional stone house, stone roof, natural stone concrete tiles, buff brick stone cladding, assorted roof tiles, green, brown, charcoal. Dry Stone walls on the approach to Stocksmoor after exiting Birks Lane, Stone Railway bridge, dry stone, rendered walls along one side of Station Road. **Cross Lane**, Predominantly Natural stone, with aesthetically pleasing roofs to match the character of the build including red clay tile roof, several stone roof tiles, several natural stone roofs, several slate roofs, newer builds artificial stone,

concrete roof. Predominantly dry stone walls to boundary edges of fields and gardens along both sides of Cross Lane. **Top O' Th' Moor**, Natural stone and dry stone walls at both edges of the lane

Cross Lane and Top O'Th'Moor has been omitted in the Newett Design and Access Statement (apart from the terrace housing on Stocksmead) and, in order to paint the full picture are now included, the majority of the houses along Cross Lane are natural stone including the Grade 2 listed cottages and likewise Top O'Th'Moor .

The Design Matters preplanning application advice to Newett dated 18 March 2024 exhorts that the:

> *'New residential proposals will be expected to respect and enhance the local character of the area by: Taking cues from the character of the built and natural environment within the locality; creating a positive and coherent identity, complementing the surrounding built form in terms of its height, shape, form and architectural details; illustrating how landscape opportunities have been used and promote a responsive, appropriate approach to the local context '*

Pre Planning suggested including a mixture of natural stone and buff brick to complement existing dwellings, unfortunately and without reference to the existing homes in the area, Newett propose Artificial Stone (no colour specified), Grey Roof tile and Red Brick.

The proposed houses are 2 storeys high, some 2.5 storeys high, in contradiction to pre planning guidance, and will tower above the homes in Station Road that are 1.5 storeys high blocking out rural views and much light. The height and roofline will be further exacerbated by the rise in the field. The existing houses and gardens will be dwarfed and shaded particularly in winter blocking out sunshine used as a free source of 'top-up' heating and drying washing naturally. Again the natural eco system will be disturbed in established gardens being shaded and as a consequence that will struggle to fruitfully grow crops, shrubs, fruit trees and flowers.

Newett Design and Access Statement Sketch Layout 02 refers to this:

> *Larger units located to the north western boundary to create a smooth transition between the existing properties along Station Road and reflects plot widths.*

Whilst the Newett Sketch Layout 01 (that was discarded as being too costly) shows the plot widths of the proposed site being the same as the existing homes on Station Road. Sketch Layout 03 proposes 7 houses and a block of flats. This is not reflective of the existing plot widths of the 5 existing homes on Station Road.

The planning application includes a block of 4 flats yet again this does not reflect the existing houses or needs in this rural area, the block is located in the west side of the estate in the corner next to the railway line. This will mean that people will live in the upper floor of the flats and subsequently have a clear view looking down into both the bedrooms and living areas of the existing Station Road homes. The garden boundary walls butting onto the proposed estate are dry stone walls that are aesthetically pleasing and providing a safe home for small animals. As well as being an environmentally friendly construction method with no need for mortar thus reducing the environmental impact and encouraging sustainability. Replacement timber fences are included in the plans although pre planning guidance considers that tall timber fencing is unlikely to be

acceptable. Some stone walls are included but are not specified as being dry or built from local stone. Losing any of the dry stone walls within the estate would have an adverse effect on sustainability.

Newett in their Design and Access statement do not commit to preserving the dry stone walls:

> *Existing field boundaries are dry stone walls, which could be retained where possible.*

The plans of the new estate show the garden at the back of the flats as being communal presumably with shared access, ie not fenced into 4 private areas. It is unclear if there will be lift access to the upper floor to facilitate ease of access to communal outside space for the less mobile.

Pre planning guidance Principle 17 states:-

> *' All new houses should have adequate access to private outdoor amenity space that is functional and proportionate to the size of the dwelling and the character and context of the site.'*

Preplanning advice from West Yorkshire Police Designing Out Crime Officer

> *'has advised that shared rear access to gardens for terrace plots are not recommended and should be designed out'*

In the same document Quantum and Density *state*:

> *'the location of the site is important in terms of the type of housing required in the locality.'*

There are no flats in Stocksmoor so there is no precedent for building flats in this sensitive rural location and definitely not for squeezing an isolated block of flats into the far corner of an estate. The inclusion of bungalows would be much more appropriate to include in the planning application as recommended by the pre-planning discussion. This would reflect the needs of an area with a high mature population.

Further preplanning guidance:-

> *... the different house types should also be well mixed within the site, rather than having a row of detached dwellings to the north western edge*

> *... The affordable homes' build quality and appearance should render them indistinguishable from the market housing in the development*

The affordable housing comprising one terrace of four houses, one pair of semi detached and one block of 4 flats are located next to the railway line. This is located as far away as is possible from the entrance to the site, assuming the occupants will be reliant on public transport this will mean walk to the entrance (6 minutes) along Shepley Road (3 minutes) and then to the required Bus Stop (2 minutes or 9 minutes) or to the Train Station (5 - 9 minutes depending on the platform required). This assumes clement conditions and this does not take account of adverse weather conditions such as icy pavements, moss and leaves on the road or water cascading down Station Road from the Crossroads. This results in a 11 minutes or 18 minutes walk to the required bus stop and a 14 - 18 minutes walk to the Station. If the direction of travel is to Huddersfield and a ticket is needed this

will mean an additional 5-7 minutes to cross the bridge and walk down to the Sheffield platform to purchase the ticket and then retrace the original journey to reach the Huddersfield platform.

The affordable houses are red brick and the flats from artificial stone. Whereas the location of non affordable housing Plots 1, 2, 3 6, 7, 8, 49, 50, 37, 36 35, 34 are all detached properties situated on the outer perimeter of the site are all proposed from artificial stone. The noise pollution during the construction phase of the site will be all the more pronounced in this rural area adversely affecting wildlife and people living and working from home will be unviable.

Next to the Station House off Station Road there is a Railway yard that is directly opposite where the proposed affordable homes are to be located. When necessary Network Rail undertakes overnight work on the Railway and vegetation (the last work was carried out on 7th June finishing at 00.30 hours usually the finishing time is 04:00 hours). The heavy equipment is brought to the yard to be stored until needed when the overnight work begins. Network Rail sends out letters to the homes near the Railway, this will provide valuable information for the Noise Assessment and Report as recommended in the Pre planning guidance.

There are trees, hedgerow and a dry stone wall along the boundary of the site next to the Railway Line, this is not shown as being dense on the proposed plans, and in reality the existing trees are huge and dense with few gaps to the tree line. These trees and their canopy spreads would need protection during the construction phase as the proposed new estate road runs alongside this boundary.

The railway embankment has had remedial work to the Sandstone alongside the northern side of the proposed building site. Preplanning guidance suggests a much needed structural survey for retaining the bank adjacent and the impact of the proposed building works.

As the Railway track travels towards Shepley and the land dips the railway line becomes closer to the field and the ancient woodland. This may provides an opportunity to introduce innovative measures to enhance and protect diversity without damage or intrusive construction works, such as manmade water diversion from the building site that will disturb the natural balance. In contrast Network Rail has in one area created a wetland habitat containing ponds they are hopeful it will attract great crested newts alongside trees and plants.

Consideration would also need to be given to the safety of children playing in the green space near the Railway line as well as in the Play area adjacent to the Shepley Road site entrance, existing provision in Stocksmoor does not have this problem as it is situated in a safe place away from traffic.

Furthermore access to the actual site is via Shepley Road on a bend with poor visibility. Coupled with the national speed limit to the Shepley side of the bend, cars approaching from this direction are likely to be increasing their speed to climb up the hill from Stones Wood Bottom when they approach the site entrance.

In the preplanning discussion concerns were ‘raised regarding highway safety and the layout of the development proposed. Any future development will need to be policy compliant in relation to highway matters and will need to ensure that there would be no detriment to highway safety.’

The Planning Inspectorate also refers to access in the Report to Kirklees Council by Katie Child B.Sc.

(Hons) MA MRTPI and Elizabeth Hill B.Sc. (Hons) B.Phil MRTPI - Inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State Date: 30 January 2019

Housing Capacity 87

SL3358, Shepley Road, Stocksmoor (Green Belt release) – The site is extensive in size and sloping, but is well contained. Therefore development would not cause significant encroachment or sprawl, and I am satisfied that impacts on the nearby wood could be dealt with as part of the process of option assessment in the next Local Plan review. Exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to release the site from the Green Belt. Third party land is needed to provide access but there is a reasonable prospect of securing this beyond the Plan period.

Stones Wood Lane is narrow, busy with cars, vans, farm traffic, online grocery delivery wagons; even the bus being substituted for a missing train has been known to use this route. There are infrequent passing places and it is really narrow with poor visibility in places. All the other access routes:- Thunderbridge, Thurstonland, Farnley Tyas and Fulstone have a highway structure that is woefully inadequate to support this new building site, both during and post construction. The Railway Bridges in Stocksmoor are not wide with particularly narrow pavements making it dangerous for pedestrians and particularly for pedestrians pushing wheelchairs or pushchairs. The road through Whitestones which would be the walking route to Thurstonland School has stretches where no pavement exists on this particularly fast road, just as the walking route to Shepley School has no pavement along Stones Wood Lane. Much needed access to shops, dentist, doctors, hairdressers, physiotherapists and community activities in the Church Hall and Library will in reality involve a car or taxi journey.

During the construction phase the day to day lives of the residents, cyclists, walkers and horse riders of Stocksmoor and the surrounding villages will be blighted by numerous huge construction vehicles, cranes, skip lorries, trenchers travelling to and from the construction sites making their way through narrow roads posing a danger to those going about their daily business. This detrimental effect on our roads will be disastrous and made worse by the extra pressures of other building sites in the local area that have passed planning or in the process of seeking planning permission.

The proposed new build does not achieve a net density of 35 dwellings per hectare as per the Safeguarded local plan listing for the site of 2.51 hectares. The proposal does not maximise housing delivery is contrary to Policy LP7 of the Kirklees Local Plan and Paragraph 124 of the National Planning Framework. In the initial Newett Design Evolution Sketch (Design and Access Statement) there are 50 (ish – detail too small) properties including 4 flats not the target of 87 included in the Local Plan. Pre planning guidance includes a note that the entire site would not be capable of being built upon due to its topography, citing that the site's developable area appears to be 1.7ha. If the Local Plan identified 87 homes for the site, obviously a more attractive figure to meet Kirklees housing target. A question of paramount importance that needs to be asked is was this figure of 87 houses a deciding factor in allocating this land as being safeguarded?

Sketch Layout 02 has fewer than 50 properties and the developable area is reduced. The final proposal is using 1.6 hectares and 0.92 for green space with 50 properties. Newett justifies this in the Design and Access statement:

> *• Developable area reduced to deal with topography and steep change in levels. The level of retaining structures required for the previous sketch proved too costly to achieve a financially viable scheme.*

If the unused 0.92 hectares is really too costly to build on now or in the future in terms of bio diversity gains the unused land instead of simply being green space could create extra Allotment space, a wetland habitat, or a Village Green with the title deeds being passed a local Trust to provide

safe stewardship with a clause prohibiting any further house building on this land.

The application by Newett does not enhance the hamlet quite simply it is detrimental to all the residents whether they be part of the human or wildlife population.