Opinion statement
2024/60/93046/W: land at Mount Pleasant, Plains Lane, Marsden, Huddersfield, HD7 6AN

This statement is submitted in support of the above planning application, which I understand may be considered by Committee.

I should begin by declaring my credentials and making it clear that I submit these comments as an individual and not on behalf of the organisations I quote here. I am a Chartered Landscape Architect, who has lived in Marsden for half a century and devoted a huge part of my time to furthering the environmental quality of the village on behalf of the community. In recent years that has been as Chair of Marsden Community Trust, which has led the Place Standard exercise that led to the Council commissioning the Marsden Blueprint, and I now Chair the Marsden Blueprint Partnership.

I am still professionally active and chair the Yorkshire Design Review Panel, in which capacity I have frequent dealings with development projects that challenge the Green Belt: I normally discourage these except in circumstances where I believe the merit of the scheme outweighs the harm to the Green Belt. This scheme at Mount Pleasant is one that would, in my opinion, definitely justify the minor softening of Green Belt constraints that are involved and I will explain why.

The site is well known to me and has a rather chequered history of low grade land-use familiar on the fringes of urban areas, where commercial farming no longer survives and 'horsiculture' results in degraded soil and vegetated habitat. The stable block and land have both fallen into disuse and neglect, which means that the greatest pressure on the land is from development. Marsden is seriously deficient in land suitable and available for housing, for which there is strong demand, so there is likely to be endless pressure on the Green Belt designation for a volume of housing far greater than this application. In my view that density of development would be very harmful in that it would extend the 'hard edge' into open countryside.

This application is based on a land-use model much more closely aligned with the local tradition of smallholdings and folds, where small clusters of homes sit within land that is quite intensively cultivated. In this case the cultivation will enjoy an even more worthy function of being managed by a community that includes but is not confined to the residents of the new homes. The

community garden idea fits well with the Marsden culture and has been promoted by the developer in liaison with Marsden Community Trust.

The scale of built form proposed is, in my opinion, easily justified by the size and form of the existing stable block. The proposed design fits well with the vernacular of linear blocks surrounded by open land and will contribute to a very effective 'feathering' of the settlement boundary to the village where is tapers into open countryside. A similar effect could be justified with a single dwelling but the provision of three modest size buildings in a short terrace does more for housing capacity in Marsden and is entirely in keeping with the local model.

Further merit is evident in the exemplary level of environmental and energy performance of the proposed building. Worthy of note here is the strong track record of Chris Herring, a nationally renowned leader in environmentally sustainable construction with sound community connections, which will ensure that the development is implemented to a textbook standard. This combination of best building practice and holistic land-use sets an excellent example for the standard of development that the Blueprint aspires to.

I am happy to speak to this when the application is heard by the Committee or to confer with Planning Officers if preferred.