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Statement of Opinion

Proposed redevelopment at former Lumb Lane Nurseries site, Lumb Lane, Almondbury

This statement is submitted in support of the application for planning permission made for the redevelopment of the above named site.

I am a Charted Planner, an Academician of the Academy of Urbanism and a Fellow of the Institution fn Economic Development. During my career I have taught in many planning schools; undertaken research for central government, local authorities and others; and practised my profession widely. I have, in addition, a comprehensive knowledge of housing having chaired many major social landlords and the unique Northern Ireland Housing Executive (the principal social landlord and the housing authority for Northern Ireland). Previously, at national level I was Chair of the Academy for Sustainable Communities, a board member of the Homes and Communities Agency and Chair of the National Rural Housing Forum, reporting to the Housing Minister. Furthermore, I was a co-director of the National Brownfield Strategy Pilot, which is the source of the current policy emphasis on the need to utilise brown field, derelict, 'grey belt' and other previously developed land for housing and other purposes.

In Kirklees, I Chair the Kirklees Climate Commission, which, among other objectives, seeks to improve the overall energy, carbon and environmental performance of land use, buildings and infrastructure. In particular, my expertise in this respect is on the promotion and provision of sustainable new and retrofitted housing, especially on brownfield and 'grey belt' sites. This is an essential requirement if Kirklees is to achieve the ambition outline in the Council's Climate Emergency Resolution and subsequent environmental and planning statements and strategies. Furthermore, I and my KCC colleagues are providing advice to Kirklees Council and others on how to achieve sustainable spatial development in, for example, the new Local Plan and the determination of individual development proposals.

It is in the context provided above that I write in support of the proposed redevelopment of the Lumb Lane Nurseries. This, in my opinion is a classic brownfield site, which is now derelict, an eyesore and represents the waste of a valuable land resource in an area with unmet housing need. In terms of the current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Lumb Lane Nurseries is an archetypical 'grey belt' site: an area of previously developed land which is within the existing urban boundary and surrounded on three sides by housing. As a 'grey belt' site it satisfies the requirements for such a designation through its conformity with the NPPF sections 154g and 155. More

specifically, the redevelopment of the site would "not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt" (NPPF 154g), indeed the planned redevelopment would improve the general character of the area and enhance the "purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the area "(NPPF155).

Furthermore, and of critical importance in ensuring that the redevelopment of the site is in accord with best environmental and climate change practice, the proposal for Lumb Lane Nurseries is aimed both at enhancing the local environment (especially biodiversity) and helping to combat climate change.

I have been party to the evolution of the proposal for redevelopment and have also been asked by the applicant to provide this opinion on the merits of the application. In my view the proposal represents the sustainable development of a currently disused derelict, 'grey belt' site. Through redevelopment the site would contribute substantially to achieving sustainable development (as specified in NPPF sections 7 to 14) in six ways:

- It would bring back into use land which is currently derelict, degraded and unused, this, by implication, will reduce the call for the release of adjacent green field land for housing and other purposes, thereby maintaining the character and ecological purposes of greenfield land and Green Belt.
- Given the current degraded condition of the site, it is unsurprising that the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment prepared by Estrada Ecology Ltd has concluded that the proposed redevelopment would enhance biodiversity far beyond the 10% minimum net gain specified in national policy. This reflects the careful and well-informed nature of the redevelopment proposal, for example, it is intended to leave a 5m strip at the northern boundary of the site to protect an existing watercourse.
- The design of the five homes proposed for the site reflects best practice and would help reduce Kirklees' average carbon emission per property. The passive design approach will produce energy efficient homes that exceed current Building Regulation standards. Air source heat pumps, solar PV panels and a high level of insulation will reduce energy consumption considerable. The solar PV installations will alone contribute an estimated emissions saving of over 2,620 kg CO2 annually.
- Landscaping, amenity space and roads and other circulation spaces also contribute to a sustainable development. Planting of trees, shrubs and other plants will both add to biodiversity and provide for the sequestration of carbon. As the redeveloped site matures the trees and other major planting will remove over 100 kg CO2 from the atmosphere annually. The use of permeable materials for the provision of roads and other circulation spaces will enhance rainwater absorption, reduce flood risk and provide a sustainable urban drainage system.

- The location of the site, the provision of a new footpath at the frontage and the availability of safe walking routes to shops, social facilities and schools provides excellent accessibility and means that the redeveloped site will encourage active travel. The provision of cycle storage facilities adds to this feature of the site, whilst the design of the homes as 'live-work' units will minimise car use. These features of the development will help to reduce CO2 emissions.
- Finally, the often neglected social and economic components of sustainable development are also affected positively by the reuse of the site. The developer intends to emphasis local procurement (including the use of locally sourced reclaimed stone and other materials) and this approach will both generate substantial additional spending within the Kirklees economy and provide jobs.

For all of the above reasons I consider that the application for the reuse and redevelopment of the site should be approved. When complete the redeveloped site will provide a model of sustainable housing development that can be replicated on similar infill 'grey belt' sites elsewhere in Kirklees. The redevelopment of the site offers a genuine opportunity for Kirklees to plan for a more sustainable future in which all resources are valued and managed responsibility.

Should it be required, I am happy to speak in support of the application.

If you need to contact me, release respect my visual disability which means that I cannot use email directly. You are welcome to contact me by telephone.

Professor P. W. Roberts BA, MA, DLitt, MRTPI, AoU, FIED, FRSA, OBE