

Representation to Public Inquiry – Re Site Allocations – Kirkless Local Plan

Land to the west of, Southwood Avenue, Honley, Ref H822

This representation should be read in the context of the approval of inclusion of site H178 which has always been an integral part of the proposals.

There are two specific objections both of which are entirely interrelated:-

- 1 – The rejection of site H822 for Housing Allocation
- 2 – The definition of the Green Belt Boundary at this Location.

Rejection of Site H822 as part of the Housing Allocation

Discussions have taken place with Kirklees Planning Authority from 2006 concerning the area that is now denoted by sites H178 (included for Housing allocation) and H822.

It has been our contention throughout that this entire site lends itself to residential development and this is largely accepted by the planning authority (hence the inclusion of H178 as part of the housing allocation). While generally there has been a collaborative relationship with the council, due to staff changes and perhaps a lack of appreciation of technical elements related to ground level changes we believe a number of genuine misunderstandings of the site and its surroundings have been made.

There are but two grounds given by the planning authority for the exclusion of the area of the site on the steeply sloping land (re H822). These being:-

This site is very poorly configured in relation to the existing settlement pattern and would result in the sprawl of built form down a prominent hillside to the detriment of the openness of the green belt in this location.

This is demonstrably not the case. This site would be a natural continuation of the existing Southwood Avenue, with 3 or 4 buildings at the same level as the existing properties. However the key issue that has been continually missed is that these buildings would entirely blend into the hillside behind them and as such would not create any perceptible visual intrusion at all.

Given the above it is crucial to consider that on the allocations already proposed, the area above this site would be for housing and as such the entire area above would be impacted by the proposed residential units. Whereas the small number of houses beneath would not have a ridge height that even extended above the existing ground level above – irrespective of the other development taking place.

With regard to the site, it is our strong contention that any decision maker cannot readily understand the site without a careful examination of the site topography. As such we produced topographical surveys and cross sections to demonstrate the point above and we would wish to represent this evidence, and would strongly urge the inspector to visit the site. While in two dimensions the area looks relatively large, in reality the developable area is small, extending to 3 or

4 units – which we would be perfectly happy to be constrained to. The site topography does not readily allow for more than this.

It is our contention that there will be no detriment to the openness of the greenbelt at this location with the inclusion of this small area of developable land.

This is a restricted area of green belt that in this location maintains separation from Honley and Brockholes. Opportunities for settlement extension are limited by the presence of steep slopes where development could be prominent

This issue is also dealt with in our objection to the green belt designation at this point. The key issues here related to 3 primary issues:-

The greenbelt as currently drafted would preclude the effective development of housing site H178. As the new access cannot be achieved within the boundary as currently drawn. The existing track would also need to be maintained which would be outside of the greenbelt boundary.

The greenbelt boundary as currently shown is not related to any specific boundary or topographical feature, as such the boundary at this location is rather nebulous and difficult to defend.

The obvious location for the greenbelt boundary should be at the base of the steep slope as set out in our original submission. This provided both an obvious change in level and slope but is also the location of a well-established hedge line separating the scrub land in question with the higher quality grazing land in the fields below.

An additional point that has been raised in the past is the concern related to the risk of coalescence between this site and H584. It needs to be remembered that there is a large railway line on a high embankment between this two locations, together with further open fields so the pressure for these two housing locations to merge is effectively a non-issue in any event

Impact on Site H178

The inclusion of this site has long been supported by the planning authority. However the means of access to this site is less well understood. Based on the assumption that the site would be over 10 dwellings an adopted road would be required. The level change between the existing Southwood Highway and the development site is circa 8 metres. To achieve this change in level even using a steep gradient of 1 in 15 (accepted nationally as maximum), potentially requires an area of the site in excess of 100 metres to be adversely affected . If this road had to be positioned within the existing site and greenbelt boundary an area approaching 100m in length by 9 metres in width would be to some extent compromised. Thereby reducing the number of units that could be location on the site and bringing into question the viability of the housing site.

Conclusion

The inclusion of site H822 and the amendment of the greenbelt at this location would result in a scheme that best maximises the ability for H178 to come forward, provides a small increase in housing numbers to offset the impact of the highway on site H178 and also creates a readily understood and defensible boundary for the greenbelt, while at the same time not adversely impacting on the openness of the greenbelt or views of the surrounding area.

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