

MATTER 44 - HOLME VALLEY SOUTH ALLOCATIONS

H730 – Land west of Royds Avenue, New Mill, Holmfirth

Issue - Are the proposed employment, housing, mixed-use and safeguarded land allocations in Holme Valley South justified, effective, developable/deliverable and in line with national policy?

1 Introduction

1.1 The allocation of Site H730 for residential development is not sound as it is neither justified nor is it consistent with either the emerging Policies in the Local Plan or with national policy guidance

1.2 Paragraph 126 of the NPPF sets out a requirement for Local Plans to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. When considering the impact of a proposed development upon the significance of a designated heritage asset, Paragraph 132 of the NPPF makes it clear that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation and explains that significance can be harmed by development within its setting. This site adjoins the boundary of the Wooldale Conservation Area and makes an important contribution to its rural setting. The loss of this area and its subsequent development will harm elements which contribute to its significance.

1.3 Consequently, the allocation of Site H730 is considered to be in conflict with the following aspects of the emerging Local Plan:-

- The Spatial Vision – in that it conflicts with the intention that development will take place in a sustainable way (balancing economic, social and environmental priorities), that the local character and distinctiveness of Kirklees and its places will be retained, or that the natural, built and historic environment will be maintained and enhanced through high quality, inclusive design
- Spatial Objective 8 - in that it will not protect or enhance the characteristics of the historic environment
- Policy PLP35 – in that it will not conserve elements which contribute to the significance of a designated heritage asset.

1.4 It would also be contrary to national policy guidance as set out in the NPPF. As a result, this allocation does not:-

- Help to deliver a “*positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment*” as is required by NPPF Paragraph 126.
- Contribute to protecting or enhancing the historic environment. Therefore, it will not deliver sustainable development in terms of the conservation of the historic environment [NPPF Paragraph 7].
- Conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. Therefore it will runs contrary to one of the Government’s Core Planning Principles [NPPF Paragraph 17].
- Give great weight to the conservation of the area’s designated heritage assets [NPPF, Paragraph 132]
- Provide clear and convincing justification that the harm it would cause to the heritage assets is outweighed by the benefits [NPPF, Paragraph 134].

2 The Heritage Impact Assessment [Doc.LE83]

2.1 On the whole, we would broadly support the methodology that has been used for the Heritage Impact Assessment of this site, particularly the use of an approach which seeks to identify the relative importance of the various parts of this site to the significance of the heritage assets in its vicinity. Whilst the Heritage Impact Assessment has set out a very good evaluation of the historical development of the settlement, of the townscape character of Wooldale, and of many of the elements which contribute to the significance of its heritage assets, we consider that it has failed to properly articulate the contribution which this undeveloped site makes to the setting of Conservation Area and that, as a result, it has underplayed the harm that its loss and eventual development might have upon the special architectural or historic interest of that area.

3 The Contribution which Site H730 makes to the character of the Conservation Area.

3.1 Travelling in a southerly direction down Town End Road from the northern part of the Conservation Area, as one approaches the bend at its junction with Little Lane, there is an attractive prospect across the whole of the northern part of this

sloping site over the roofs and rear elevations of the buildings on Royds Avenue towards the rising farmland beyond, back-dropped by the profile of the hills in the distance. The northern also field makes makes a considerable contribution to the approach to the Conservation Area travelling in a westerly direction along Kirkroyds Lane.

3.2 Wooldale Conservation Area was designated in 1980. As can be seen from the OS 1:10,000 map of 1982 (Epoch 4, Third Revision) [Appendix 1] residential development in the thirty years since the Conservation Area was designated has resulted in the loss of a swathe of open land that once penetrated from countryside the south into the heart of the village. Site H730, therefore, is one of the few areas where it is still possible to experience and appreciate the Wooldale Conservation Area in its wider rural setting. The loss of this site and its subsequent development, therefore, would sever all connections of the Conservation Area from the surrounding countryside, harming the approach to the Conservation Area from the east and significantly impacting on views from the designated area itself. Consequently, whilst we would agree with the Heritage Impact Assessment that the area at the north-western corner of Site H730 is of High Significance to the character of the Conservation Area [Doc. LE 83, Fig, 10], we would suggest that the remainder of the green-coloured area on Fig. 10 is also of the same level of importance.

3.3 The loss of any of this site would result in a fundamental change to the rural landscape setting of the Wooldale Conservation Area. Contrary to the conclusions in the Heritage Impact Assessment, therefore, it is difficult to comprehend how any housing on Site H730 could be successfully developed in a manner which would still retain the open rural character of this area.

4 The current allocation within the Kirklees UDP

4.1 The Kirklees UDP identified this site as Provisional Open Land. Provisional Open Land are sites having “*identifiable value as open land*” but are also judged “*to be capable of development either now or when new infrastructure ...can be provided*” [Doc. LE1, Paragraph 2.15]. There appears to be some expectation that because of this UDP designation this site should automatically come forward as an Allocation in this Local Plan.

4.2 The UDP makes it clear that:-

“The reassessment of provisional open land will involve determining for each site whether in the prevailing circumstances there is a case for releasing some or all of the land for development, or whether it should be maintained as provisional open land until the next review of the plan. Reallocation of provisional open land as green belt or urban greenspace will occur only in exceptional circumstances.”

.... The review will follow the guidance in PPG2 concerning safeguarded land, so that, exceptionally, some land may be removed from the provisional open land designation because it is unfavourably located in terms of achieving sustainable development”. [Doc. LE1, Paragraph 2.16 to 2.17]

4.3 It is clear, therefore, that the allocation of Provisional Open Land for residential development is not automatic and that, in some exceptional circumstances, certain sites might be reallocated as Urban Greenspace. It is clear that the development of Site H730 would result in considerable harm to an element which contributes to the significance of a designated heritage asset. As such the development of this area will not deliver sustainable development in terms of protecting and enhancing the historic environment, and conflicts with the Government’s Core Planning Principle that heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Historic England would contend that and that this reassessment of the importance of this site would constitute an “exceptional circumstance” warranting reallocating the former Provisional Open Land as ‘Urban Greenspace’.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The Heritage Impact Assessment has failed to properly articulate the contribution which this undeveloped site makes to the significance of Conservation Area and that, as a result, it has underplayed the harm that its loss and eventual development might have upon its special architectural or historic interest.

5.2 In terms of NPPF Paragraph 134, this is likely to constitute less than substantial harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset, albeit at the upper-end of the spectrum of harm. Whilst the degree of harm may be less than

substantial, nevertheless, it would still be causing harm to a designated heritage asset. As such, therefore, it would not be delivering sustainable development in terms of protecting and enhancing the historic environment, it would conflict with one of the Government's Core Planning Principles (that heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance), nor would it be likely to provide the positive strategy for the conservation of the historic environment that is required for Local Plans.

- 6 Suggested change
- 6.1 Site H730 should be deleted

APPENDIX A: OS 1:10,000 map of 1982 (Epoch 4, Third Revision) showing the extent of the Wooldale at the time the Conservation Area was designated

