

With regard to the planning consultation for Application Reference 23/00085/OUT, the Parish Council would object to the proposed development on a number of grounds. Whilst this decision before you is for outline planning with all matters reserved other than access, clearly outline planning consent must fully consider the concept and principles of planning for the proposed development, and such a decision cannot therefore rely solely on the details of site accessibility. Our response details a number of objections to this proposal.

The National Policy Planning Framework States:

“Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist”.

Detailed Objections

1) This development is not ‘local development plan led’ in accordance with the first principles of the National Planning Policy Framework. It breaches a number of core policy principles in the local development plan - for the following reasons:

- a) The proposed development is not being put forward to meet local business or community needs. The local community have always co-operated with planning requests through the Parish Council and has seen the development of a rural *exception* site (Broadcares Chapel Garth Development). No consultation has taken place with the community or the Parish Council to assess the need for this greenfield development. CP4 should take account of *“the expressed preferences of the local community about the type, form and location of development in each settlement, advanced through Neighbourhood Planning processes”*. CP4 also states that developments should not *“a. impact adversely on the character of the settlement or its setting, important open spaces and views; designated and undesignated heritage assets and the character of the landscape*
- b) The scheme is on Agricultural Land Classification category 3 land and by reference to surrounding fields is likely designation 3a – defined within the national definitions of ‘the best and most versatile agricultural land’ therefore it is not *“low-value agricultural land, and not of high importance”* as stated in the planning application.
- c) The land is outside of the local development limit boundaries and does not meet the tests for community needs based development which can be applied cautiously to small developments (set out in CP4) – the village has met and exceeded the contributions to housing need as anticipated in the local development plan, which were not updated on the recent five-year review. CP4 states *“in all cases, development proposals must respect the scale, form and character of the settlement and its service and infrastructure provision.”*
- d) The land is greenfield when brownfield development sites are still available in the village and surrounding areas. There are already approved planning applications in place for 16 housing units within the village including affordable housing.

Richmondshire's recommended Local Plan for 2018-2039 states that;-

'The development limits currently adopted were saved from Policy 23 of the old Local Plan (1999- 2006) which was adopted in 2001. These were then modified by the current adopted policy CP4 - Supporting Sites for Development, enabling proposals adjacent to development limits to be brought forward. This approach was an interim measure until the development limits could be fully reviewed and updated. These development limits have now been reviewed as part of the Local Plan review.'

The new development line to be adhered to can clearly be seen on the map under Policy H2 - Development Limits Maps by ward. The Local Plan 2018 -2039 states under the Development Limits section 5, that all development in the first instance should be located within development limits.

- e) Hunton is a Secondary Service centre in the hierarchy of local development planning and not a focus for development. The Parish Council challenge the overall definition on the Local Plan naming Hunton as a Secondary Servicing Village, raising the village in the hierarchy for house building. Local plans are continually adopted throughout the years and no attention has been given to updating the status/ lack of services the village now provides in 2023.

Currently, the village has no shop, and the school is at full capacity. There is a twice daily bus service between Bedale and Leyburn but no links to Richmond or Catterick which could provide job opportunities. There are very few employment opportunities within the village.

- f) Fifteen units is not a modest or small-scale development site in the context of a village of c170 homes – it would in fact represent a 9% increase in the village outside the development boundary or 12.5% when added to the initial rural exception site, equivalent to c10% growth in the population. This is in contravention of CP4 and CP8 in the local development plan ("*development that is proportionate to the existing settlement size and local service provision*") and the National Planning Policy Framework which states "*Entry-level exception sites should not be larger than one hectare in size or exceed 5% of the size of the existing settlement*". Please note that the planning application papers estimate the site to be 0.94 hectares (drainage strategy) – if the existing exclusion site were added in this would again take the development over the stated scale.
- g) Rural exception areas should not be used by landowners as an argument for precedent for building rights. This was expressly stated by the Parish Council when the original Broadacres site was developed.
- h) In a more recent call for land the site was put forward for 5 units of development. It would have been easier to be supportive of a linear development of this kind, which also added biodiverse greenspace, however the wider logistical objections to the site would not be overcome simply by reducing the scale.

2. Core Principle CP3

If confirmed as Category 3b land it would still remain greenfield land. Greenfield land should not be considered for development unless it is necessary to meet the needs of the local population and only then where brownfield and redevelopment sites have been exhausted. CP3 states *“Development will be encouraged to utilise previously developed land first (brownfield land), where that land is in a sustainable location and is not of high environmental value, in preference to greenfield sites. The use and development of land will be assessed against the community’s housing, economic and social requirements”*. Even should this site be plan led and to meet locally based needs assessment, it is the contention of the planning application as submitted that brownfield and redevelopment sites have been exhausted in Hunton.

Whilst the proposed development would no doubt contribute affordable (but not social) housing to Richmondshire it would notably not be ‘plan led development’ as specified in the National Planning Policy Framework, which states in its opening paragraphs that *“Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the development plan, and is a material consideration in planning decisions”*.

3. The local infrastructure is not suitable to accommodate the development

The public transport network would not support economic commuting into and out of Hunton and there are very few jobs in the village economy. All primary and core service centres are not within what is considered to be commutable cycling distances (stated in the planning proposal as c5k). This contravenes the National Policy Planning Framework in its instruction that *“planning system[s] should actively manage patterns of growth in support of [sustainable transport] objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes”*. Further the Local Development plan states in CP3 *“Development and the provision of services should, as far as possible, be located so as to minimise the need to travel. Convenient access via foot, cycle and public transport should exist or be provided, where possible, encouraging the use of these modes of travel for local journeys and reducing the need to travel by private car”*

The proposal would add a road onto Wild Hill Lane. Wild Hill Lane is one of the 4 routes out of the village to join the village to primary and core service areas. The direct route out of Wild Hill Lane to the A684 is a lane – single track in nature with limited passing places and no footpath. The few passing places which have arisen have resulted from the erosion of the verges and in most cases are heavily potholed. Currently the only junctions onto Wild Hill Lane are from limited farm entrances/single dwellings, and Greenacres. Large tractors and trailers are frequent traffic down the lane with a number of the fields belonging to farmers who are located on the north side of the village. It should be noted that the Chapel Garth development plans originally intended a footpath along Wild Hill Lane which has never been developed as the land required is privately owned and subject to a covenant put in place when Greenacres was developed – this contravenes the Highways stated recommendations at the time of planning approval (conditions HC12 a and c on plans 12.00736/FULL). It should be noted that the design statement for this proposed development still lists this as the pedestrian access to the village.

The proposal also notes that access to the village could be via the public footpath which comes from Wild Hill, passes around the site and exits at the top of Wyville Grove. A footpath is indicated on the NYCC rights of way map but we would note the following ;-

- There is no egress onto Wyville Grove as the original pathway was built over by RDC when Wyville Grove was constructed and it passed through private gardens and two houses.
- There is no egress from the site from the north east.

4. Climate change and environmental considerations.

The first and most obvious objection on environmental grounds is that this is an unnecessary and unsought (by the local community) development on a greenfield site – so any bio-diversity planning must be set against the destruction of an existing greenfield site. The ecological report prepared for planning notes that the grassland appears to be constantly grazed throughout the year and also notes that if this were not the case then the area is capable of supporting biodiverse habitats. It is difficult to argue that this is not valuable agricultural land but also that the scheme would improve biodiversity considering that there is no baseline for the field without its current agricultural use.

In the Outline Planning Application, under the Biodiversity and Geological Conservation section, it states that there are no protected and priority species on or adjacent to the site. This is not the case.

Curlews have been nesting for the past seven years on rough ground adjacent to the site. The UK breeding population of curlews is of international importance, with around 30% of the west European population wintering in the UK. And yet, there have been worrying declines in the breeding population throughout much of the UK. In 2015, curlews were added to the Red list on the [UK Conservation Status Report](#). Red is the highest conservation priority, with species on this list needing urgent action. Curlews are struggling. They return to nest sites, year after year.

There is evidence of hedgehogs visiting all the adjoining properties. Barn Owls and Tawny owls are frequently spotted roosting in adjacent trees and hunt across the proposed site and surrounding fields. Badgers are known to have a set close to the site and the redacted sections of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal may refer to badgers. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was conducted at the end of October, 3+ months after bird nesting activity ceases (the law allows hedging after 31st August), so lack of bird nesting is unsurprising, and was undertaken at a time when hedgehogs are hibernating. It contradicts first hand evidence from residents. During the spring and summer a number of amphibians can also be seen (toads, frogs, newts) but will be in hibernation by October. Concreting over the vast majority of the site (access road, drives, 15 building footprints) will lead to decreased biodiversity and increased flood risk.

The local plan then specifically states in Core Principle CP2 that new developments:

“Be designed to minimise flood risk on-site and elsewhere, by:

- Incorporating Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) unless they are demonstrated to be impracticable or they will pose an unacceptable pollution risk. SuDS should minimise surface water flood risk, protect waterways and provide aesthetic and ecological benefits”

The SuDS analysis of the site shows this to be an *“untenable solution”* and will discharge surface water into the local waterway i.e. Hunton beck. Whilst the planning application is keen to point out this is a zone 1 flood risk site it is very close (100m cited in the relevant report) to a zone 3 flood risk along the beck which is central to the village and existing housing. Any development that diverts ground water and foul water into the beck as is the proposal here will essentially increase flood risk in the zone 3 area running through the village. The village has been subject to two major flooding incidents in 2012 with the beck overflowing and the bridges being at full capacity. Any scheme which would result in further discharge into the beck would only make the situation worse. Currently the proposed

greenfield site is uphill from the village and the land therefore offers a precious soak away protecting local housing. The development of this land to incorporate a road and significant hard surfaces will impact the ability for the land to offer this soak away. Even in its current undeveloped state, water has flowed off the field and flowed down the gardens at No 5 and 6 Greenacres requiring emergency intervention to avoid properties being flooded. Furthermore, the flow rate calculated for run off exceeds building regulations and would require a huge concrete tank and braking system with the associated maintenance requirements (it is not clear who will maintain these?). Core Principle CP3 of the local development plan states developments will promote *“the natural drainage of surface water mitigating the effects of flash flooding of rivers, drains and drought.”*

The application refers to the possibility of connecting into the existing foul sewers along Leyburn Road or on the Bedale Road which are a considerable distance from the site. It is difficult to see how access to the Leyburn Road sewer would be achieved where it crosses the Hunton beck. Also, access across the private land to the Bedale Road sewer is unlikely to be agreed. It is noted that the various correspondence to secure the drainage report states clearly that these distances are considered too long, I quote from the email *“Furthermore, it looks like the watercourse located to the north of the site is too far away from the proposed development and has third party land separating the watercourse from the site* It is noted that the application states sewage systems used by Chapel Garth and Greenacres are privately owned which suggests that access to a treatment system for foul water has not been addressed by the plans.

The Parish Council would note that the length of Hunton Beck which flows between Captains Bridge and the bridge across the ford is PC owned land and the whole area is a children’s play and recreation area. During the summer the beck is used as a play area. Any proposal which could result in any foul water overflow into the beck would be vigorously opposed. An existing issue with a septic tank which has discharged into the beck just above Captains Bridge resulted in a child catching an infection directly caused by sewage.

4.) The proposed development is not sensitive to the local surroundings.

CP4 states *“in all cases, development proposals must respect the scale, form and character of the settlement and its service and infrastructure provision.”* The ecological report in the planning pack notes that adjacent housing is linear in nature and that *“linear habitats are also present in the wider environment”*. Hunton is a beautiful village which celebrates and attracts people enjoying an open rural lifestyle. Public rights of way across open fields at the back of existing housing are used extensively for recreation. There is also very little ‘back-to-back’ development in the village and this is to be celebrated - even in town planning back-to-back development is not considered to be the best form of layout – it creates issues for privacy and noise, which end up being mitigated by high fencing or trees which blocks light and lends a sense of being hemmed in which is not in keeping with the desire for rural life. A development of this size in such a contained area would in fact create a ‘community within a community’ and be completely out of keeping with the linear nature of the village. Fencing to protect privacy would also be at odds with the recommendations of the ecological report prepared for planning which recommends open boundaries – more suitable for linear developments. The existing exception site was built with full consultation in the village, it was built on a linear site – at a T to existing housing – along an existing road and where well established trees already provided screening for neighbours (note the preference for linear development is clearly expressed in the consultation documents still available on the planning portal. The planning authority agreed that no windows should directly overlook existing properties in perpetuity (see condition 13 in the section 106 agreement and paragraph 12 in the grant of planning) and that a wide natural gap

should be included in the plans. However, this proposed development provides a significant amount of back-to-back development with a number of windows overlooking existing housing.

5. Affordable/Social Housing

We note that there is provision for six social affordable or intermediate rent housing units. To sustain the future of the village, this is not a solution and what the village may actually require are social housing units to rent. It is unlikely that any of these proposed units would be affordable for local residents in need of housing.

- What is the evidence for the demand for these units within the village? There has been no form of consultation to establish any need.
- There are already six affordable houses to rent on the existing Wild Hill development.
- Since they were built, there have been very few occupants with strong local connections and Broadacres took a considerable amount of time to fill the units.

We note that a large development is about to be approved in Leyburn which has 28 discounted homes to buy and 10 classed as affordable to rent. This would seem to go a long way to meeting affordable and social housing needs.