

PROPOSED LAND DEVELOPMENT
ELIOT'S PARK GRAZINGS
PEEBLES

14-023

ASSESSMENT REPORT
FOR
SUITABILITY OF LAND FOR PLANNING APPLICATION PURPOSES
IN RELATION TO SOCIAL HOUSING

for

Director of Commercial Services



Architects' Section
August 2014

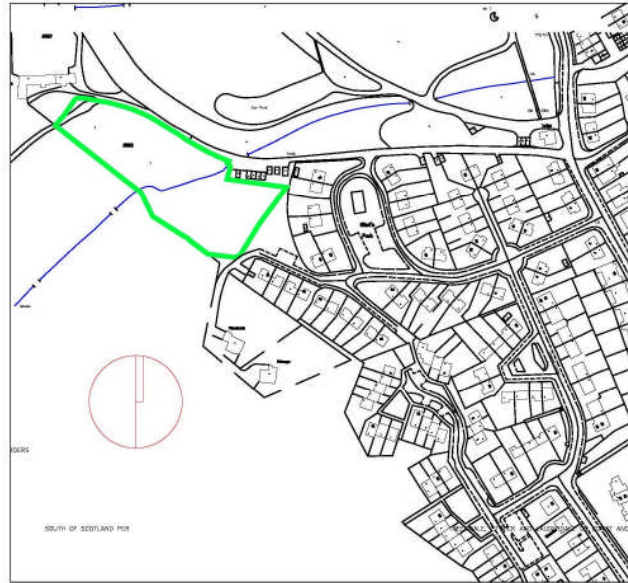
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1.00 INTRODUCTION

- 1.01 The purpose of this report is to review the suitability of land at Eliot's Park Grazings, Peebles for disposal with the intention of developing social housing.



Site Location Plan

2.00 BACKGROUND

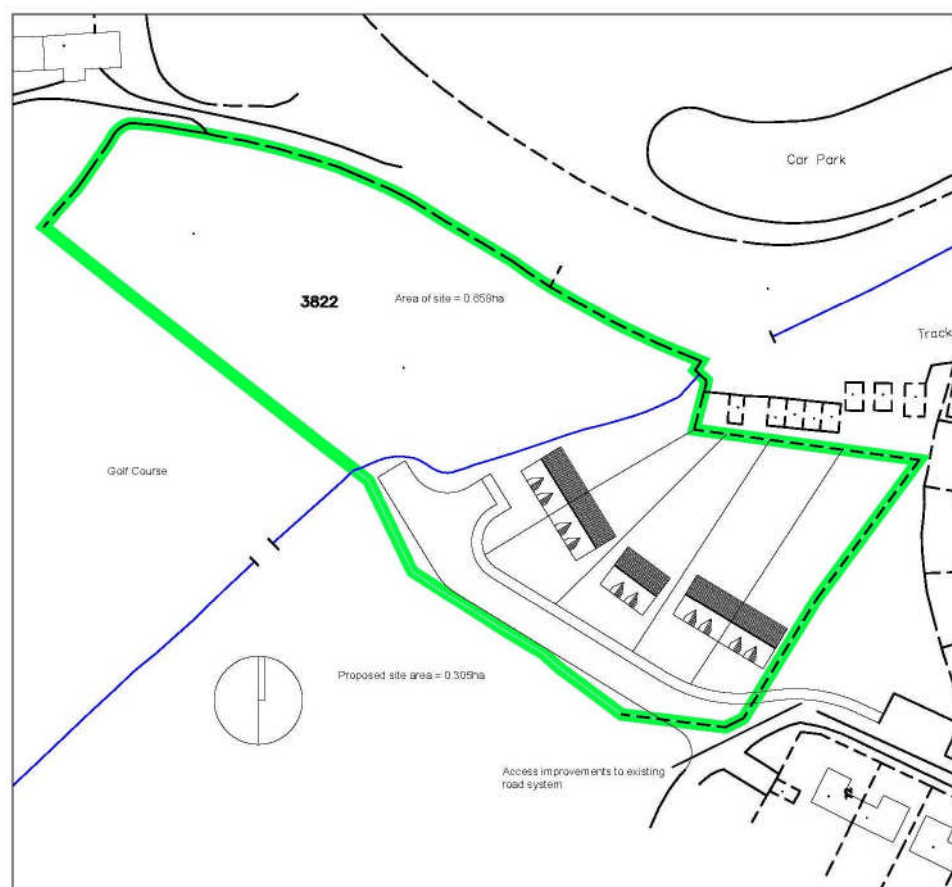
- 2.01 This piece of land is part of the Peebles Common Good portfolio.
- 2.02 Members of the Sub-Committee requested, at their meeting of 7 May 2014, that the use of the land be reviewed with a view to its development for social housing use. It was further requested that the benefits of preparing a preliminary Planning Application on behalf of the Sub-Committee be examined.
- 2.03 The Council's Architects' Section undertook a review of this same site in 2001, in which the option to develop up to eight semi-detached and three detached properties was identified.
- 3.04 At the time of the previous report the following observations were made:

"The initial assessment of the site has revealed that access is the primary obstacle to any future development. There are two possible options: (a) from the existing housing estate to the south west of the site & (b) from a track to the north west of the site. The final section of road from the existing housing estate (a) is not owned by Scottish Borders Council & suffers from poor visibility. Work would be required to improve this access. Additionally there is a triangle of land on the northern edge of this road adjacent to the site which is identified for transfer to Scottish Borders Housing Association; it has been suggested that this land be retained pending the outcome of any decision in relation to the disposal of the site. The track (b) to the north west is in poor condition & is not owned by Scottish Borders Council.

The available land equates to 0.658 hectares sloping downwards to the north. The southern edge is bounded by the golf course. A small watercourse bisects the site & delineates the extent of the settlement boundary."

3.00 PROPOSALS

- 3.01 The site has been re-visited as part of the current exercise and, at first inspection, would appear to be a good location for housing development. Its position on the edge of the town and adjacent to the golf course would seem to be good factors in its favour and ones that would be attractive to developers and potential purchasers.
- 3.02 The undulating nature of the site along with the watercourse that bisects it would make development disproportionately expensive, but these factors would also contribute to the creation of larger than normal plots in the current market. It is assumed that this would generate higher sale prices, thereby compensating the cost of development. This would not be a beneficial factor if the site is developed for social housing.
- 3.03 The sketch proposals prepared in 2001 would still be valid and are considered suitable for the current exercise for illustrative purposes without expending further design costs at this stage.



Sketch Proposal From 2001

- 3.04 As part of the research for the current review a meeting has been held with the Planning Officer in the Forward Planning Team to discuss the suitability of the site in relation to the Council's Local Plan. This consultation has revealed that the land had been identified for possible housing use in the Council's Draft Local Plan, but that objections were received from the adjacent Golf Club and a private individual.
- 3.05 The proposed use of the site was considered by the Reporter during the Inquiry into the Local Plan and is recorded in his Report into the Finalised Local Plan 2005. The inquiry was held on 24 October 2006. The conclusion of the Reporter was that the site is unsuitable for development

for housing. The Reporter's assessment was detailed and considered the suitability of the site under four separate headings, deeming it "acceptable" in three of the four categories. Critically, however, it was deemed to be "unacceptable" in terms of its *local impact & integration*. This resulted in his overall assessment of the site being "unacceptable."

3.06 In reaching this conclusion, the Reporter paid particular attention to the proximity of the golf course, the possible loss of mature trees along the boundary and the risk of injury from golf balls.

3.07 A discussion has also been held with the Council's Housing Officer who was aware of the site & has advised that it had been considered previously by Eildon Housing Association. It had been recognised that the site was physically capable of development, but that the combination of its topography, access difficulties and the Reporter's findings made it an unattractive development proposal. At the time of its investigation, Eildon HA identified the possibility of six units on the site.

3.08 There has been no known application for Planning Consent submitted for this site. The Reporter's findings do not preclude any application being made, but it is likely that they would have a bearing on any decision taken.

3.09 If the Sub-Committee wished to pursue a formal application it would be incumbent on the applicant to demonstrate how any development would address the concerns raised previously, especially in relation to protection against stray golf balls.

4.00 CONCLUSIONS

4.01 The land at Eliot's Park Grazings is of a sufficient size to allow the construction of a number of houses.

4.02 The restricted access arrangements and the natural topography of the site, including the presence of a water course, would make any such development disproportionately expensive, especially for social housing.

4.03 It is considered that any application for Planning Consent would be challenged on the same grounds as were identified during the preparation of the Local Plan and that the findings of the Reporter would be given due prominence in the assessment process. The conclusion of such an application is, however, not yet tested and it may be that the gap of a number of years since the Local Plan inquiry may permit an alternative conclusion to be drawn.

4.04 Provision should be made for higher than normal professional fee allocation by the Sub-Committee, if it wishes to instruct the submission of a formal application, to reflect the abnormal issues identified above and the time that would be required to develop a suitable submission.