

**STATEMENT OF REVIEW**  
**Planning Application 19/01645/FUL**  
**Land to South West of Mill Lade, Blyth Bridge**

**1 Introduction**

This statement is supporting the review of a decision not to grant planning permission in detail for a dwelling house at land to the south-west of Mill Lade, Blyth Bridge.

The planning application was a re-application following a refusal for planning consent earlier in 2019. The earlier refusal was entitled 19/00194/FUL. Both refusals were made based on policy matters, namely contravention of policies HD2; PMD2; & PMD4.

In the later refusal (to which this review refers) an additional two reasons were added, namely IS8 which refers to flooding and EP1, EP2 & EP3 which refers to biodiversity. I am unclear as to why these policies were not represented in the earlier refusal notice and this highlights inconsistencies that can occur during the planning process.

In the planning officers report, it mentioned that no pre-application discussions took place. This is an interesting statement when the current policy at Scottish Borders Council is not to entertain pre-application advice or discussion. Both applications were determined within the targeted timescale and at no time has there been a suggestion that the applicant or the agent could enter any discourse which might have strengthened the case of the respective application. (Please see Refusal notices)

**2 Site Context**

The site is located to the south of Mill Lade, Blyth Bridge. It is accessed from the A701 via the adopted road servicing Mill Lade. The site is greenfield although it is redundant and serves no agricultural use. The site is out-with the current settlement boundary at Blyth Bridge.

Mill Lade was developed some 15-20 years ago. The development site is to the rear of two earlier properties, Knock Knowes and Mill View. The new development contains six houses, generally 1.5 storey, grouped around the cul-de-sac access.

The applicant developed the Mill Lade site. They retained a portion of ground to the South of the development site which forms the application site. It is accessed from the hammerhead in Mill Lade. From the hammerhead, the ground rises and the proposed house is to be placed on the highest sector of the site. The axis of the proposed building is North East to South West which generally accords with the other neighbouring properties.

Two of the three site boundaries are natural historic enclosures. The Torth Water envelopes the South and South East of the site whilst the west boundary is a progression of the settlement boundary. The third boundary is the boundary conterminous with Mill Lade.  
(Please see OGS 298 01)

### **3 Reason for Refusal No 1.**

The first reason for refusal of the planning application 19/001645/FUL states that the house would not relate sympathetically to the character of the existing building group.

The applicants live in No 2 Mill Lade, which they built several years previously. When I was briefed to design the new building, the design was to be based on their existing house. We almost copied the existing building - its eaves and ridge heights, massing and fenestration reflect the house at No 2, which is also very much a design harmonising with the other properties in Mill Lade.

### **4 Reason for Refusal No 2**

This states the development or new house would be unsympathetic to the character of the surrounding area and would fail to make a positive contribution to the sense of place.

I believe this is the reason that those considering this review should make a site visit. When one visits Mill Lade one is aware that the development has a beginning, a middle, but no end. The consensus of the owners of the neighbouring properties is that the development of this site would indeed give Mill Lade some finality and as such would enhance the sense of place rather than detracting from it.

### **5 Reason for Refusal No 3**

There can be no argument that the site lies out-with the notional settlement boundary. There is argument however that the natural (and logical) settlement boundary does indeed include the application site.

Blyth Bridge developed around a small nucleus of buildings, namely a corn-mill, church and manse to the East of the A701 and a smithy and school to the west. As the village developed it generally followed a line towards the North along the access to Blyth Farm. A strong, straight boundary between the village and the agricultural land to the west developed and the start of this is visible on the first edition Ordnance Survey maps. During the 1980s the village expanded with a ribbon development of private housing running north along Blyth Farm Road and further development was allowed as infill between Blyth Farm Road and the A701.

The Mill Lade development is the only significant movement to the south of the village and is built on ground naturally enclosed by Tarrh Water to the South and the former Mill Lade to the North and West. The working Mill Lade is no longer there. From the early maps one can clearly see that the land-use of the ground to which the application site relates is of differing land-use to the neighbouring agricultural ground.

The west boundary of the village encompasses the application site and careful planting around the periphery of the site would enhance the approach to the village from Kirkdean and give the southern end of the village closure, finalising the north-south divide between residential and agriculture. (Please see sequential maps)

## **6 Reason for Refusal No 4**

Failure to prove the development will not be at risk of flooding.

As part of our ongoing research we now attach site sections following surveys and information collated by our appointed engineers. These show that the proposed house is above the freeboard required in the event of a 1 in 200-year flood.

The applicants have lived in Blyth Bridge for many years. There has only ever been one serious flood affecting the village and that was as a result of damage to the aqueduct taking water from Talla Reservoir to Edinburgh. This aqueduct is now redundant and the water route from Talla no longer passes through the village. (Please see Flood Study Sections)

## **7 Reason for Refusal No 5**

Biodiversity, wild-life and habitats etc

As mentioned previously this was not a reason for refusal in the earlier planning application. As such it is an inconsistent statement. We have never been asked in either application to produce an ecology study, but if the review were to be successful, we would be happy to produce this as a condition of a granted planning consent.

In the earlier application Nature Scotland made some recommendations as to respecting the corridor through which the Tarth Water passes, and these recommendations have been included in the planning application to which this review relates. Please study my site plan on the application drawing and you will see this. (Please see Letter from SNH)

## **8 Matters of Consequence**

There have been no local objections to this development.

There are no road safety issues worsened by this development.

There are no services constraints.

The applicants are local and have strong business links in the rural community, operating a successful second-generation family business serving the farming community and construction industry.

They are robust employers with a strong ethic of training and improving matters for their current workforce and any new staff.

Reaching retirement, the development of this site would give them some comfort in future years.

## **9 Summary**

- The development of this site is a natural progression to finish and close the Mill Lade development and strengthen and enhance the village boundaries to the south of the village.
- Rather than being branded as an 'isolated rural' development the site and the respective building thereon should be considered to be part of the entire building group at Blyth Bridge.
- The boundary treatment and tree-planting proposed around the East, South and West boundaries will complete the soft edge of the south of the village. It will also improve the visual amenity to what is otherwise a derelict piece of ground and will provide an enhanced biodiversity for wildlife.

## **10 Appendices**

- No 1 Scottish Borders Council Planning Refusal Notice 19/01645/FUL
- No 2 Scottish Borders Council Planning Refusal Notice 19/00194/FUL
- No 3 Planning Submission Drawing OGS 298 01
- No 4 Sequential Maps of the Village showing how it has developed
- No 5 Flood Study Sections 200-001-FR drawings 001;002;003
- No 6 Letter from SNH (relates to the earlier application)