

# REQUEST FOR REVIEW

## Planning Application 21/01283/PPP Land South East of Hardens Hall, Duns For Duns Golf Club

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This request for a Local Review is made in relation to the above planning application which was submitted to the Planning Department of Borders Regional Council on the 9th August 2021 and was determined by Officers using their delegated powers on the 11th March 2022.
- 1.2 The application sought permission for the development of a single dwelling on land owned by Duns Golf Club which was previously used as part of the Greenkeepers Yard but is now redundant and is surplus to the requirements of the Club
- 1.3 The site extends to some 0.33ha and is located on the south side of Hardens Road that runs north west from the A6105, 130m to the west of Duns Development boundary and 2.5 miles from the town centre. The land is in part planted with trees and has an existing hedge that fronts the highway. The site does not have high visibility in the landscape given the topography of the area and the amount of existing planting around its boundaries.
- 1.4 The background information that was submitted with the application explained that Duns Golf Club is struggling to keep their head above water economically and requires some financial assistance, if it is to carry on as an 18-hole course. One alternative would be to drop down to a 9-hole course, but the fear is that such a course of action would only result in further economic problems in the longer term for the club and the community.

### 2.0 REASONS FOR REFUSAL

- 2.1 Officers determined that the proposal should be refused consent for a single reason that stated

*“The proposed development is contrary to Policy PMD4 and Policy HD2 of the Scottish Borders Local Development Plan 2016 in that the proposed development, at the location identified, would have an adverse impact upon*

*the composition and quality of the landscape character as the application site would be visually detached from the settlement of Duns and it would not relate to an existing building group within the countryside. The proposed development would erode the integrity of the development boundary for the settlement of Duns. Furthermore, the proposed development would fail to comply with Policy PMD2 in that there is no infrastructure to support pedestrian movements between the application site and the settlement of Duns, which would adversely impact upon pedestrian safety”.*

2.2 It is clear from the Reason for refusal that the primary concerns of Officers when taking their decision are the following issues.

- a) Impact on the local landscape
- b) Location of the site outside the development boundary of the settlement
- c) The lack of a dedicated pedestrian link between the site and the settlement

### **3.0 CASE FOR APPROVAL**

3.1 No technical issues with regard to the development of this brown field site have been raised within the reason for refusal so there is no need to discuss these matters within this review request. Instead, I will concentrate on those issues identified by Officers and listed above.

3.2 An aerial photo montage is attached to this statement which shows the location of the proposed site in relation to Duns and the development boundary. (Plan A). It demonstrates that it is accessed from the A6105 road which runs west from the town then north west on Hardens Road, from which it takes direct access.

3.3 The attached photo montage illustrates where the site sits in relation to other developments in the area which have been approved or have been constructed. These developments are referred to in the assessment of Planning Applications, by the Council’s officers, as Housing Groups including:

- a) the development round Hardens Hall which is immediately to the west of the site, called the Western Housing Group (3 dwellings and 7 sites);
- b) the Langton Edge Group, (5 sites and a new Occupational Health and Therapy Centre); the Hardens Cottages Group (4 holiday cottages and 4 dwellings);
- c) the Wellrig Park development to the east, part of the East Housing Group, (15 dwellings and unidentified number of sites);
- d) the new houses round the junction of the minor road with the A6105, Pouterlynie (8 Dwellings)
- e) the new development to the north of the Hardens Road, called the Quarry Road Group. (4 new and 3 existing Dwellings)

3.4 Analysis of the southern edge of Hardens Road from the Duns Development boundary to the western edge of the Hardens Cottages Group (Plan B) indicates that 58% of the road frontage is either built on or has permission for housing development. This also shows the sites (coloured yellow that have been granted consent under the current Local Development Plan.

3.5 This clearly demonstrates that although the site would be "visually detached from the settlement", it would fit into the existing pattern of development and would be part of a separate group of buildings, the Western Housing Group. It would not therefore result in the "adverse visual impact" that has been suggested by officers as a reason for refusal.

3.6 The application is not in an isolated location within open countryside but is clearly part of an existing developed group of buildings. Plan C indicates the dwellings in the neighbouring site at Hardens Hall. This is a development of three dwellings which is classed as a group under Planning Guidance.

3.7 The second issue is the location of the site outside the established settlement boundary of the town. Clearly the development boundary as set out in the Local Plan does not include the proposed site. That fact does not however preclude its development given that exceptions are allowed

for, within Policy, if the development is job related, is affordable, if it meets an identified shortfall or if there are community benefits.

- 3.8 In the present case it is considered that the development is job related, that it does meet a shortfall and that there are significant community benefits that would flow from an approval.
- 3.9 As already explained above, the Golf Club is facing difficult financial times and if it had to close or if it were to change to a nine-hole course there would have to be redundancies such that at least 2 local jobs could be lost. The injection of capital that would result from the sale of the application land, should be enough to carry the Club over this difficult time, until things improve. The Club has a new management structure and is actively marketing the facilities but requires capital to improve these facilities.
- 3.10 The Golf Course is an important community asset for the town of Duns. It provides a significant recreational facility and attracts visitors to the area. If this facility was to be lost, then there would be a detrimental economic impact on the town.
- 3.11 With regard to the third issue identified, which is the lack of a footpath link to the town, that is clearly a matter for the Highways Department and as officers point out in their report, it would not be a problem that can be rectified on the back of an application for a single house.
- 3.12 We would however point out that the pedestrian access situation has not changed for many years and that during this time there have been a number of permissions allowed as demonstrated by the attached plans/montages and list of approvals. This applies to consents granted before and after the new Local Plan was approved in May 2016 and not just to historical consents.
- 3.13 For example, under consent 20/00753 a new Therapy Centre was approved at Langton Edge to the west of the review site despite it including both staff and guest accommodation. (Plan B - Plot 4 on the montage). A further example is 18/00056 under which a single dwelling was approved further along the same road as the current site (Plot 2 on the view).

- 3.14 In addition, there is considerable pedestrian traffic adjacent to the site as golfers cross from the 1<sup>st</sup> green to the 2<sup>nd</sup> tee. There are warning signs about golfers crossing
- 3.15 The other relevant justification for development outside the development boundary of the settlement is a shortfall in the type of housing proposed. In this case a single self-build plot is proposed and a search of available housing sites in the area confirms that there are no sites currently available within the town for this type of development. Sites have consent for single dwellings, but these are either not being marketed or are unavailable.
- 3.16 If the Local Authority is to ensure that a wide a range of housing tenures are available in the area, as suggested in para 6.6 of Vol 1 of the Proposed Local Development Plan, then development of this type needs to be encouraged and supported.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 In conclusion, no technical issues have been identified with this proposal which would make this a difficult site to develop. The only issues raised by officers are concerned with impact on the visual amenities and the principle of building outside the identified development boundary.
- 4.2 I have demonstrated in this statement that development on this site would be seen as part of an existing group of buildings and would have no adverse impact on the visual character of the area.
- 4.3 I have also demonstrated that the exception policy PMD4 is applicable in this case as the development would support local employment in a local business and would protect a local recreational asset. I have also shown that other similar consents have been granted under the current local plan, in this area.
- 4.4 For the above reasons it is requested that members now approve this application for a single dwelling under the review procedure.

Andrew Lester

May 2022