

**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

**APPLICATION TO BE DETERMINED UNDER POWERS DELEGATED TO  
CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER**

**PART III REPORT (INCORPORATING REPORT OF HANDLING)**

**REF :** 22/01666/PPP  
**APPLICANT :** W A Mole & Son  
**AGENT :** Richard Amos Ltd  
**DEVELOPMENT :** Erection of 4 no dwellinghouses  
**LOCATION:** Land West Of Greenburn Cottage  
Auchencrow  
Scottish Borders

**TYPE :** PPP Application

**REASON FOR DELAY:**

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**DRAWING NUMBERS:**

| <b>Plan Ref</b> | <b>Plan Type</b>   | <b>Plan Status</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 22-B961-EX01    | Existing Site Plan | Refused            |
| 22-B961-P01     | Proposed Site Plan | Refused            |
| 22/B961/Loc     | Location Plan      | Refused            |

**NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIONS: 1**

**SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS:**

One household objected to the application, raising the issues summarised below:

- visual impact;
- road safety;
- pedestrian safety/ no pavement;
- limited amount of parking or turning points;
- insufficient demand;
- site is well used for crops such as potatoes, sprouts and cereals;
- new development detracts from the character of the village;
- noise;
- light pollution;
- environmental impact;
- site not occupied by previous dwelling since perhaps 1800s; and
- limited public transport/ reliant on private car to access services.

**CONSULTATIONS**

SBC Archaeology Officer: Requests a developer funded archaeological evaluation of the site including trial trenches. Advises that the village of Auchencrow is noted as a Medieval settlement of some note, with an extensive documentary record.

The Village of Auchencrow plan of 1715 shows the village to have been more extensive in the past with a scatter of buildings on the southern side of the Auchencrow triangle, complete with the

contemporary field system strips running to the south. Two loose clusters of buildings are shown in the area. By the time of the Ordnance Survey first edition of mid-19th century date, about a century and a half later, many of these buildings have disappeared, and it would appear the area taken into use as a small field, though with the southern and western field boundaries retaining the likely Medieval plot divisions that remain to the east. There appears to be some regularity of the width of the plots on the southern side of the road, and this may hint at some layout of the village in the Medieval period.

The proposed development would have the potential for groundworks disturbance across the site that would affect any archaeological interests present. Therefore evaluation trenching work would be recommended in line with Scottish Planning Policy and the assessment of the site and its potential for archaeological remains at the local and regional level of significance.

SBC Contaminated Land Officer: Noted that the site historically housed a saw pit and a gravel pit and that the use of surrounding buildings is unclear. Considered the historic land use to be potentially contaminative and noted that it is the responsibility of the developer to demonstrate that the land is suitable for the use they propose. Requested a condition that would ensure development does not start until a site investigation and risk assessment has been agreed by the Planning Authority. Any requirement arising from this assessment for a remediation strategy and verification plan would become a condition of the planning consent, again to be submitted and agreed upon by the Planning Authority prior to development commencing.

SBC Education: No response.

SBC Environmental Health: No response.

SBC Roads Planning Service: Did not object in principle, but to fully assess the proposals required a drawing showing the maximum visibility splays of 2.4m x 25m are achievable in both directions at the junction with the public road and addressing the following:

- o Allowance for bin storage/standing at the access as the refuse vehicle will not be able to access and leave the site appropriately.
- o The site currently sits higher than the road. Levels should be included to indicate the access gradient is acceptable. It should ideally be 1 in 15 maximum.
- o Details of how surface water run-off from the access area is to be dealt with.

Community Council: No response.

Scottish Water: There is currently sufficient capacity at the local water treatment works to service the development. Further investigations may be required to be carried out once a formal application has been submitted. Scottish Water is unable to confirm capacity currently at the local waste water treatment works.

SEPA: Discussions with SEPA confirmed no consultation was required and direction was made to SEPA's standing advice.

## **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND POLICIES:**

Local Development Plan 2016:

PMD1: Sustainability

PMD2: Quality Standards

ED10: Protection of Prime Quality Agricultural Land and Carbon Rich Soils

HD2: Housing in the Countryside

HD3: Protection of Residential Amenity

EP2: National Nature Conservation Sites and Protected Species

EP3: Local Biodiversity

EP8: Archaeology

EP13: Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

IS2: Development Contributions

IS6: Road Adoption Standards

IS7: Parking Provision and Standards  
IS9: Waste Water Treatment and SUDS  
IS13: Contaminated Land

Proposed Local Development Plan 2020

IS6 Road Adoption Standards  
IS13 Contaminated and Unstable Land

Other Considerations:

Development Contributions Supplementary Planning Guidance 2011 (Updated 2022)  
New Housing in the Borders Countryside Supplementary Planning Guidance 2008  
Placemaking and Design Supplementary Planning Guidance 2010  
Waste Management Supplementary Guidance 2015

**Recommendation by** - Paul Duncan (Assistant Planning Officer) on 22nd December 2022

Site Description

The application site forms part of an arable field on the north of the C class public road, which serves the village of Auchencrow. Auchencrow is a large building group near Reston comprising over twenty dwellinghouses and a restaurant/ pub.

The application site is situated to the west of a stone built, pantiled dwellinghouse known as Greenburn Cottage. The cottage lies at a high point within the building group and its western boundary defines the western edge of the building group, with the remainder of the group located to its east. The application site's northern boundary is a roadside embankment with hedging, a semi-derelict stone retaining wall, and one mature tree. The site extends as far west as a small group of trees, within which is thought to lie the remnants of a derelict structure, and beyond which lies a field access and the B6438 road to Reston. To the south, the site boundary meets the southern boundary of West House, a two storey dwelling which was recently erected in the former garden ground of Greenburn Cottage.

The site slopes down to the west and to the north.

Proposed Development

The application seeks planning permission in principle for the erection of 4no dwellinghouses.

An indicative site plan was submitted which shows how the site layout could be configured. This shows a single shared vehicular access which the three eastern-most proposed dwellings would be set well back from. The western-most proposed dwelling is positioned further forward.

The site boundary does not include the existing field access or the small group of trees to the west, but does include a small triangle of land between the curtilage of the western-most proposed dwelling and the field access. The site plan earmarks this land for additional tree planting and the siting of a treatment plant for foul waste.

Supporting Information

- Application Supporting Statement
- Site Photos
- Indicative Site Plan

Assessment

- Principle

o Policy Context

Auchencrow is a fairly large building group, however it is not identified as a settlement within the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP). The principle of the development must therefore be assessed primarily against LDP policy HD2 (Housing in the Countryside). The application Supporting Statement makes the sole case that the proposed development complies with section (A) of policy HD2, which relates to building groups. An assessment against this policy follows below.

o Building Group Identification and Capacity

There is agreement with the application Supporting Statement that there is an established building group at Auchencrow, which has numerical scope for expansion. The size of the building group is well in excess of twenty dwellinghouses and, taking cognisance of development since the start of the plan period and the absence of outstanding permissions, in simple numerical terms there is capacity for expansion on the scale proposed.

o Relationship to Building Group

The Council's New Housing in the Countryside Supplementary Planning Guidance document states that building groups will be identifiable by a sense of place, which will be contributed to by natural boundaries such as water courses, trees or enclosing landform, and man-made boundaries such as existing buildings, roads, plantations or means of enclosure. New development should be limited to the area contained by that sense of place.

An assessment of the application site's relationship to the building group firstly demands an analysis of Auchencrow's sense of place and existing development pattern. The historic core of the village is located at its eastern entry, where a group of older buildings are clustered to the north and south of the public road. A burn runs to the north. The buildings step up as the main road rises through the village to the west, lined in the most part on either side by stone walling and increasingly more modern dwellings as the road rises through the village. It passes the last dwelling to the north, The Willows, and West House to the south, until it reaches an old stone dwelling known as Greenburn Cottage. From Greenburn Cottage, the road begins to descend as it continues west down to the crossroads with the main B6438 road, where the existing farm access and a small group of trees are located. Greenburn Cottage therefore marks a high point along the road and has long formed an effective bookend to the village. Beyond it, the minor road drops down fairly abruptly towards the B6438. The proposed site is situated off this section of the road on land featuring a pronounced fall to the west, contrary to land within the existing building group, which is contained by landform to the east of Greenburn Cottage.

The western boundaries of Greenburn Cottage and West House are primarily defined by hedging, with trees also marking the south-west corner of West House's garden ground. These features provide a strong western edge to the building group.

There has been a significant amount of development to the east of Greenburn Cottage this century, however this infilled undeveloped land within the building group. The proposed development would extend beyond the confines of the existing building group on land that, by virtue of topography and the strong western edge to the building group, is considered to be outwith its sense of place, contrary to the Council's New Housing in the Countryside Supplementary Planning Guidance document.

Furthermore, the application site forms part of a larger undeveloped field (aside, arguably, the recent infill houses to the east of Greenburn Cottage). Whilst the site's irregular shape may not be conducive to the most efficient modern farming methods, it is being worked, and extending into this field is also considered contrary to the guidance within the Council's New Housing in the Countryside Supplementary Planning Guidance document.

The existing development pattern within the building group is linear to the north and south of the public road. There is a fine line between appropriate linear development and ribbon development. The application proposes to continue the linear development pattern within the application site, which would be logical, however as the proposed development would extend the group beyond its most logical and appropriate termination point, it is considered that this would amount to ribbon development.

It is noted that four dwellings were approved in the early 2000s and have since been erected on the north side of the public road. These dwellings are located upon a plateau within the building group to the east of the obvious termination point of the village (Greenburn Cottage). The dwellings do not lie on west-facing sloping ground and in spatial terms relate well to dwellings to the south and east. The dwellings were approved under previous local planning policies.

Finally, it is also acknowledged that traffic signs identifying the village and the local 20mph speed limit are located beyond the proposed site at the cross-roads with the B6438. This is the logical place for traffic signs to be located. They provide forward notice of Auchencrow's location and help slow road users in advance of the built up area. These are minor considerations in assessing Auchencrow's overall sense of place, which is defined primarily by buildings, topography, trees and hedging. The concealed remnants of a derelict structure within the small group of trees to the west of the site, and possible early 19th century works or buildings on the site also do not define Auchencrow's sense of place today.

#### o Principle Conclusion

The proposed development is considered contrary to LDP policy HD2-A (Housing in the Countryside - Building Groups) as by virtue of topography and the strong existing edge to the building group, the site is not considered to be well related to the existing building group. The proposed development would extend beyond Auchencrow's sense of place, within an undeveloped field, and would result in ribbon development to the detriment of the building group's character.

#### - Landscape Impact

By consequence of the described topography, the building group is not prominent from the western approach on the B6438 road. Aside the roof of West House, landform largely serves to screen the building group from view, reinforcing the containment of its sense of place. Developing the more readily seen application site would result in the settlement becoming visible across a wider area, changing its relationship with the surrounding countryside with adverse implications for landscape amenity and Auchencrow's character and sense of place.

The application supporting statement advises that the existing hedge running along the front of the wall adjacent to the road will be retained, as well as the existing isolated tree along the same boundary, which would be reinforced by additional trees adjacent. Further trees hedging would be planted to the south and west, to help to integrate the development into the wider rural landscape. Whilst these points are appropriate and welcomed, they would not overcome the more fundamental issues of principle identified above.

#### - Placemaking

The indicative site layout is not a formal proposal at this stage but demonstrates how the site could be developed if this application were approved. The proposed shared vehicular access is logical and avoids a proliferation of accesses that would not be desirable in visual terms, nor one assumes in road safety terms. However a consequence of the shared access drive is the setting back of the proposed dwellings away from the road. This has been a less successful form of housing development seen elsewhere within the village and would detract from what would become the new western entrance to the building group. The scale of earthworks required to establish a new vehicular access of suitable gradient is also a significant concern. As refuse vehicles would not be able to utilise the internal access, bin stances, likely in the form of flat hardstanding, would be required at the roadside and may exacerbate these issues. The proposed re-alignment of the existing wall with radius curves at the access entrance would however be welcomed.

#### - Vehicular Access, Road Safety and Parking

As noted above, the application proposes that a single new vehicular access would serve the four dwellinghouses from Auchencrow's C113 road. As per objector comments, pedestrians and motor vehicles are not segregated along the C road by dedicated footways or footpaths, with pedestrians relying on intermittent grass verge, parking and accesses to step off the road. However, the development and access would be within the village's 20mph zone, and the Roads Planning Service does not object to the principle of the proposed development.

Further information would however have been required to enable the Roads Planning Service's full assessment of the application, to ensure the proposed new vehicular access could achieve suitable gradients and visibility, as well as information on bin stances. As the principle of the proposed development cannot be supported it has not been appropriate to request this information.

- Ecology

No ecological reports were provided with the application. Habitat potential at the site does appear to be limited, and whilst some survey work would have been desirable, the absence of such reports is not deemed to be a reason for refusal in this instance.

- Contaminated Land

The Contaminated Land Officer has studied historic mapping for the area and advises that the site once housed a saw pit and gravel pit. There is no evidence of this on the ground, nor on historic mapping dating from the late 19th century onwards. A planning condition would be required in the event of approval to secure site investigation, risk assessment, and potential remediation of any contamination identified on the site. Subject to a condition such as this, the proposals would satisfy LDP policy IS13 (Contaminated Land).

- Archaeology

Planning history for nearby application sites makes reference to local archaeological interests and the Archaeology Officer was latterly consulted on account of this. The Officer has detailed the potential archaeological interests that extend to the site itself in his consultation response. Mitigation would be required in the form of a site investigation, including evaluation trenching on the site, and would need to be secured by planning condition to ensure LDP policy EP8 (Archaeology) is met.

- Development Contributions

Contributions are currently sought towards the local primary school (Reston PS) and high school (Eyemouth HS). These contributions could be secured by means of a legal agreement.

- Affordable Housing

A commuted sum towards off-site affordable housing would be sought and could also have been secured by legal agreement.

- Other Matters

There is no known reason to believe that matters such as residential amenity, water supply, foul drainage and SUDS could not be addressed adequately within the proposed site. Matters such as this would ultimately require further consideration at the detailed application stage.

**REASON FOR DECISION :**

The proposed development is contrary to Local Development Plan 2016 policy HD2 (Housing in the Countryside) and Supplementary Planning Guidance New Housing in the Borders Countryside 2008 in that by virtue of topography and being located beyond the well established western edge of Auchencrow, the proposed site would not be well related to an existing building group of three or more dwellinghouses. The proposed development would extend beyond Auchencrow's sense of place, into an undeveloped field, and would result in ribbon development to the detriment of both the village's character and the surrounding landscape.

**Recommendation:** Refused

- 1 The proposed development is contrary to policy HD2 (Housing in the Countryside) of the Local Development Plan 2016 and Supplementary Planning Guidance New Housing in the Borders

Countryside 2008 in that by virtue of topography and being located beyond the well established western edge of Auchencrow, the proposed site would not be well related to an existing building group of three or more dwellinghouses. The proposed development would extend beyond Auchencrow's sense of place, into an undeveloped field, and would result in ribbon development to the detriment of both the village's character and the surrounding landscape.

**“Photographs taken in connection with the determination of the application and any other associated documentation form part of the Report of Handling”.**