

Policy 13 – Sustainable Transport

This policy aims to encourage, promote and facilitate developments that prioritise walking, cycling and public transport for everyday travel and reduce the need to travel unsustainably.

The objection states that *'the application site is somewhat detached from the settlement of Duns'* and that the *'absence of a footway at this location is a road safety concern'*.

There is nothing contained within this application which goes against the policy stated above.

The application site is approximately 0.3 miles from the 30mph signs on the entrance to Duns and the entrance to the residential estate at Wellrig Park. It is less than 1 mile from the Primary and Secondary Schools and 1.5 miles from Duns town centre. Planning approval has recently been granted by Scottish Borders Council for the erection of three dwelling houses on either side of this application site which together with the existing properties constitute a clear settlement location.

Travel times into Duns town centre could comfortably be completed with 20 minutes by bicycle or under 30 minutes on foot. Travel times to the schools are similar for those using equivalent modes of transport from existing properties in the east or south of Duns. The lack of public transport provision in this area is not one for the applicant.

The application site provides the opportunity for the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure utilising renewable energy sources to remove the requirement for a petrol or diesel motor vehicle. This ties in with the Scottish Government desire for low or zero emission vehicle use under Policy 13. Development of this site would not ipso facto encourage the use of a motor vehicle (particularly unsustainable transport) for access to local services.

Harden's Road is regularly used by pedestrians, dog walkers, joggers, cyclists and horse riders. All of these are observed to pass by the application site on numerous occasions and all without incident. Each of these is a sustainable, low or zero emission mode of transport.

Approximately halfway between the application site and the end of the 30mph zone golfers cross Harden's Road between both sides of the Golf Course. Other than a low level sign (from one direction only) advising of golfers crossing there are no measures in place to reduce vehicle speed, improve visibility or provide additional protection for those crossing. It does not appear that the Council consider this to be a road safety concern.

	<p>If the absence of the footway is formally considered by Scottish Borders Council to be a safety concern can I ask how this has been quantified and what action has been taken to address this identified risk to road users? There are a number of existing dwelling houses located along Harden’s Road with additional road users as described above. Recently the Council have approved the erection of further dwelling houses within this settlement zone (and located more detached from the settlement of Duns) and it would be concerning that these vulnerable road users continue to be exposed to an identified road safety risk. If this risk is considered to be real have the Council taken steps to extend the reduced speed limit further west along Harden’s Road? I note that the speed limit at this point is 30mph and not 20mph suggesting that even on the outskirts the risk to road users is not seen as being as great.</p>
<p>Policy 14 – Design, quality and place</p>	<p>This policy requires that developments improve the quality of an area in their design impacts, and that they meet the six qualities of successful places.</p> <p>The objection states that the proposed development fails to meet one of these six qualities – namely that the proposal would <i>‘encourage the use of a motor vehicle due to the absence of a footway at this location’</i>. Though not stipulated I suspect that the quality in question is:</p> <p><i>Connected</i> – <i>Supporting well connected networks that make moving around easy and reduce car dependency.</i></p> <p>This is largely the same objection under Policy 13 above and the same counter-arguments apply. The presence or otherwise of a footway is a decision to be considered by the Council.</p> <p>Given that Harden’s Road adjacent to the application site is currently used by pedestrians without a footway being in place it does not follow that the absence of a footway will lead to vehicle use nor that the presence of a footway removes vehicle use. Cyclists will continue to utilise the roadway regardless of the provision or otherwise of a footway. In addition the use of an electric zero emission vehicle charged at the application site utilising renewable energy as per the Scottish Government targets negates any reliance on the internal combustion engine.</p> <p>The nearest footway is 0.3 miles from the application site. If it is considered that the absence of a footway servicing the existing and approved developments along Harden’s Road is of such concern should the introduction of a footway not be considered in order to reduce the supposed reliance on a motor vehicle for current residents?</p> <p>If the proposed property were to be occupied by persons with motability challenges due to any of the protected characteristics would this still be considered a valid objection?</p>

<p>Policy 15 -</p>	<p>This policy sets out to contribute to the idea of 20 minutes neighbourhoods utilising the <i>'existing settlement pattern'</i>. It is clear from previous planning decisions taken by Scottish Borders Council that the application site lies in the centre of an identified settlement pattern where planning permission has been granted over the past few years (21/01283/PPP, 22/00014/RREF, 21/01920/AMC refer).</p> <p>This application provides the opportunity to transform an otherwise isolated area of waste ground to develop an energy efficient, eco-friendly and net zero emission home accommodating future housing needs through the provision of high quality housing. The 20 minute neighbourhood is not considered an absolute in this policy but only <i>'where relevant'</i> and location for housing should instead be allocated where consistent with local living. This application should be considered in light of the previous planning applications for adjacent plots which have been approved.</p>
<p>Policy 17 – Rural homes</p>	<p>This policy aims to encourage, promote and facilitate the delivery of more high quality and affordable and sustainable rural homes in the right locations.</p> <p>The exact nature of the objection under this policy is unclear.</p> <p>Given the Council's previous decisions to grant approval for development on sites adjacent to the proposed application site (and thus create a clearly identifiable settlement pattern) it would be questionable for this application to be refused. Three additional properties have recently been approved (21/01283/PPP, 22/00014/RREF, 21/01920/AMC refer).</p> <p>The application site is an isolated area of waste ground to which there is no vehicular access. As such it is not possible to do anything with this area of ground. The site is anomalous in being the only remaining parcel of land for which Scottish Borders Council have not granted planning approval in this settlement pattern.</p> <p>Development of this site provides the opportunity to erect a modern, high quality and sustainable property with access to renewable and zero emission energy sources. This property would be built in keeping with existing properties in this location and complete the approvals already granted.</p>