

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

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

PART III REPORT (INCORPORATING REPORT OF HANDLING)

REF : 23/00507/PPP
APPLICANT : Aver Chartered Accountants
AGENT : Bidwells
DEVELOPMENT : Erection of dwellinghouse
LOCATION: Plot C Land West Of Hedgehope Cottage
Winfield
Berwick-upon-tweed
Scottish Borders

TYPE : PPP Application

REASON FOR DELAY:

DRAWING NUMBERS:

Plan Ref	Plan Type	Plan Status
A.57,647b	Location Plan	Refused
A.57,647L 3	Location Plan	Refused

NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIONS: 0

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS:

None.

CONSULTATIONS

SBC Archaeology Officer: The application site was formerly occupied by buildings associated with the Second World War airfield RAF Winfield. It is a site of local significance. Impacts to archaeological finds, features and/or deposits of the camp may arise through foundation and service trenches, as well as for access and any landscaping as garden or ground preparation of the area. If such remains are disturbed in any way there is the potential of buried ordnance and contamination issues which would require consideration if the application progressed. A programme of archaeological works would be required and recommended at this stage. An archaeological survey of the area would be recommended in order to survey the site which would help establishing what archaeological remains there are or may be in the area, and if the application being pursued further then more intrusive works of either evaluation and/or watching brief work being required.

SBC Contaminated Land Officer: The above application appears to be proposing the redevelopment of land which was previously operated as military land (Winfield Airfield, Waaf Accommodation Camp). This land use is potentially contaminative and it is the responsibility of the developer to demonstrate that the land is suitable for the use they propose. It is recommended that planning permission should be granted on condition that development is not be permitted to start until a site investigation and risk assessment has been carried out, submitted and agreed upon 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 & LL: No response.

SBC Roads Planning Service: No objection, subject to conditions. Although Roads Planning had no objections to the previous applications on this site, they were for unmanned installations with little to no traffic to and from site. As the new proposal is for a residential dwelling, some upgrades will be required. In particular, it is noted that that private access road leading to the proposed dwelling is in poor condition and is unsuitable for normal residential vehicles. Similarly, the access to the private road from the public road is substandard. Conditions requested in relation to parking, turning, access and visibility.

Community Council: No response.

Scottish Water: There is currently sufficient capacity in the Rawburn Water Treatment Works to service the development. Unfortunately, there is no public Scottish Water, Waste Water infrastructure within the vicinity of this proposed development therefore private treatment options should be investigated. For reasons of sustainability and to protect customers from potential future sewer flooding, Scottish Water will not accept any surface water connections into the combined sewer system.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND POLICIES:

National Planning Framework 4

Policy 1: Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises

Policy 2: Climate Mitigation and Adaptation

Policy 3: Biodiversity

Policy 4: Natural Places

Policy 5: Soils

Policy 9: Brownfield, Vacant and Derelict Land and Empty Buildings

Policy 13: Sustainable Transport

Policy 14: Design, Quality and Place

Policy 15: Local Living and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods

Policy 16: Quality Homes

Policy 17: Rural Homes

Policy 18: Infrastructure First

Policy 23: Health and Safety

Local Development Plan 2016:

PMD1: Sustainability

PMD2: Quality Standards

ED5: Regeneration

HD2: Housing in the Countryside

HD3: Protection of Residential Amenity

EP1: International Nature Conservation Sites and Protected Species

EP2: National Nature Conservation Sites and Protected Species

EP3: Local Biodiversity

IS2: Development Contributions

IS7: Parking Provision and Standards

IS9: Waste Water Treatment and SUDS

Proposed Local Development Plan 2020

ED5: Regeneration

Other Considerations:

Development Contributions Supplementary Planning Guidance 2011 (Updated 2023)
New Housing in the Borders Countryside Supplementary Planning Guidance 2008
Placemaking and Design Supplementary Planning Guidance 2010

Recommendation by - Paul Duncan (Assistant Planning Officer) on 19th June 2023

Site Description

The application site is located roughly midway between Sunwick and Fishwick in East Berwickshire, around 2km south of Hutton. It lies between a copse of trees on higher ground to the west and a private access track to the east, which connects with a minor unclassified public road a short distance to the north.

The site is irregular in shape and comprises land that was formerly occupied by buildings associated with the Second World War airfield RAF Winfield. These buildings, thought to have been accommodation for the WAAF, were demolished around five years ago with the remnant rubble still to be completely cleared from the site. Proposals for the redevelopment of the site were put forward at the time of the demolition but did not progress.

Planning History

Previous planning applications on or close to the site are as follows:

18/00508/FUL - Erection of two wind turbines 37m high to tip and ancillary energy storage unit - Withdrawn

18/00668/FUL - Erection of anaerobic digestion unit incorporating a biogas generator, storage tank and combined heat and power unit - Withdrawn

Proposed Development

This application seeks planning permission in principle for the erection of a single dwellinghouse. No indicative site plan, elevation drawings or visualisations have been submitted.

Applicant Supporting Information

A Supporting Statement was submitted with the application and can be viewed in full on the Council's Planning Portal.

Assessment

- Policy Context

The application must be assessed against the provisions of the development plan, which currently comprises National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and the Council's Local Development Plan 2016. Certain policies of the Council's Proposed Plan 2020 which are not at Examination are also a material consideration but do not form part of the development plan.

NPF4 states that it should be read as a whole, as should its policies, and that where a policy states that development will be supported, it is in principle, and it is for the decision maker to take into account all other relevant policies.

- Climate and Sustainability

Policy 1 of NPF4 (Tackling the climate and nature crises) requires significant weight to be given to the global climate and nature crises when considering all development proposals. NPF4 policy 2 (Climate mitigation and adaptation) states that development proposals will be sited and designed to minimise lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions as far as possible. LDP policy PMD1 is also relevant in these regards.

Generally speaking, sporadic new rural housing is not considered conducive to low carbon living. This is one reason why planning policies direct most new housing to towns and villages. Further rural housing

opportunities can be found at building groups. Sporadic new housing in the countryside is both harmful to the landscape and generally less efficient in servicing and transport.

In terms of transport, NPF4 notes that Scotland's Climate Change Plan, backed by legislation, seeks to achieve net zero emissions by 2045. This requires a reduction in car kilometres by reducing the need to travel and promoting more sustainable transport. This policy thrust is expressed most directly by NPF4 policy 13 (Sustainable Transport). This policy intends to encourage, promote and facilitate developments that prioritise walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport for everyday travel and reduce the need to travel unsustainably. The intended policy outcome is that new developments are in locations which support sustainable travel. The proposed development is contrary to these objectives.

As regards servicing, the Council's building group policy ensures most new housing is clustered. This avoids a sporadic proliferation of new housing which would normally result in less efficient service delivery (for example, this may include servicing a dwellinghouse with a water supply, energy, waste collection, drainage, post and deliveries) with greater resulting carbon emissions.

In summary, in respect of transportation and servicing, the proposed development is considered to constitute unsustainable, car dependent, sporadic housing development that is contrary to policies 1 and 2 of NPF4 and PMD1 of the Local Development Plan 2016. NPF4 is clear that significant weight must be given to such concerns.

- Brownfield Land

It is accepted that the application site holds brownfield land characteristics following the historic development of the site. It should however be noted that it is showing signs of gradual naturalisation since an earlier site visit in 2018. Photos are on file which demonstrate this.

Policy 9 of NPF4 states that development proposals that will result in the sustainable reuse of brownfield land will be supported. For the reasons set out under the 'climate change' heading above, the proposed development is not considered to be sustainable. Accordingly, it does not gain support from this policy.

NPF4 policy 17 a) states that development proposals for new homes in rural areas will be supported where the development is suitably scaled, sited and designed to be in keeping with the character of the area and meets certain criteria. None of these criteria may apply in this instance with the exception of criterion (ii), which is that the development reuses brownfield land where a return to a natural state has not or will not happen without intervention.

For criterion (ii) of policy 17 to apply, the development must be sited to be in keeping with the character of the area. The siting of a dwellinghouse within an agricultural field, distant from any neighbouring village, building group or dwellinghouse is not considered to meet this requirement. The Supporting Statement argues that this area of the Scottish Borders is a rural one where single housing developments are the norm. However, most housing in the area is located in towns, villages and existing building groups. Where single dwellinghouses are found, these are mainly farmhouses, located at related farm steading complexes, or lodge houses to historic country houses. Isolated rural housing sited sporadically in the middle of agricultural fields are not the norm within Berwickshire, nor the Scottish Borders as a whole. The proposal would not be sited to be in keeping with the character of the area. It therefore fails to satisfy NPF4 policy 17 a) ii). Even had the proposal been in keeping with the character of the area, NPF4 must be read as a whole. Other adverse aspects of the proposed development, for example as set out under the preceding 'Climate and Sustainability' heading, would have outweighed any support gained from the brownfield status of the site.

- Rural Housing/ Building Group Policy

As established above, none of the criteria for rural housing contained within NPF4 policy 17 are considered to apply. NPF4 does not restrict the criteria for assessment of rural housing to those listed within in policy 17, and, notably, it states that LDPs should set out tailored approaches to rural housing. In the context of the Scottish Borders, it is considered that the existing LDP policy HD2 (Housing in the Countryside) fulfils that purpose. For new rural housing without an economic justification, the most relevant policy criterion is HD2-A (Building Groups). This policy has the effect of clustering new rural housing at existing building

groups that are capable of expansion. There is no building group at all at this location, and as none of the other criteria apply, the proposed development is clearly contrary to this policy.

- Land Use and Character

In land use terms, there is no shortage of available housing land that might justify turning to less appropriate sites such as this. The Housing Land Audit 2021 found an established housing land supply of over 1900 units within Berwickshire.

The authorised use of the site remains agricultural and appears to be used at least partially for related purposes. At the time of the application site visit, manure was being stored on the site along with miscellaneous farm goods.

- Rural Revitalisation and Local Living

NPF4 sets out six spatial principles including rural revitalisation and local living. The former encourages sustainable development in rural areas, recognising the need to grow and support urban and rural communities together. The latter is expressed most directly in the provisions of NPF4 policy 15 and supports local liveability, including improving community health and wellbeing and ensuring people can easily access services, greenspace, learning, work and leisure locally.

The proposed dwellinghouse would not provide easy access to services, learning or to many work opportunities and there is no evidence it would support local rural communities. There is ample available housing land within Berwickshire including at the nearby villages of Hutton, Swinton and Chirnside where local services are more easily accessed. As established above, the proposed development is not considered to be sustainable. Overall, the proposal is not considered to align with the rural revitalisation or local living agendas and gains no support from NPF4 in these regards.

- Landscape and Visual Impacts

The surrounding landscape is characterised by open fields enclosed by hedging, broken by occasional tree belts. Farm steadings with clusters of dwellings and small villages punctuate this landscape. The proposed development would result in the appearance of an isolated dwellinghouse with no relationship to any existing dwelling or farm buildings. This would be harmful to the landscape quality of the area, exceeding the modest and very localised impact of the remnants of the previous demolitions, which are not prominent outwith the site and appear in the process of being addressed.

- Vehicular Access and Road Safety

The site would connect with the minor public road to the north via an existing track that is outwith the site and appears to be outwith the ownership of the applicant. The Roads Planning Service requires this section of track to be upgraded to a suitable standard. The applicant does not appear to control this section of track and it must be assumed that they are unable to carry out such upgrades. Had the application been supported, it would have been appropriate to explore this matter further.

The Roads Planning Service has also requested conditions to secure upgrades to the track within the site and visibility splays at the junction with the public road.

- Parking

The Roads Planning Service require the provision of parking and turning for two vehicles within the site. There is no reason to believe this could not be met. The proposals are not in conflict with development plan policies as regards parking requirements, subject to an appropriately worded condition that would secure provision of the parking and turning at an appropriate point in the development.

- Archaeology

The Council's Archaeology Officer considers the former land use and buildings to be of local archaeological interest. Further archaeological remains may be found and a programme of archaeological works would be

appropriate. Had the application been supported, it would have been appropriate to secure this via planning condition to satisfy LDP policy EP8 and NPF4 policy 7.

- Contaminated Land

The Council's Contaminated Land Officer notes that the site has a former military use which is deemed to be potentially contaminative. Had the application been supported, it would have been appropriate to secure site investigation, and possible remediation, by way of a planning condition.

- Infrastructure

The application form states the proposed dwellinghouse would connect to public foul sewer and public water mains. Scottish Water has confirmed there is capacity at the water treatment works however there is no waste water infrastructure so private foul waste treatment would be required. Had the application been supported, it would have been appropriate to control these matters by planning condition so further details could be explored at a later date.

- Development Contributions

The application site is within the catchment areas for Chirnside Primary School and Berwickshire High School. The Council currently seeks contributions towards both schools (current rates are £4709 and £3349 respectively). Had the application been supported, a legal agreement would have been required to secure the required contributions.

REASON FOR DECISION :

The development is contrary to policies 1, 2 and 17 of National Planning Framework 4 and HD2 of the Local Development Plan 2016 because it would constitute unsustainable, car dependent, sporadic housing development in the open countryside, unrelated to any existing building group and would be out of keeping with the character of the area. This conflict with the development plan is not overridden by any other material considerations.

Recommendation: Refused

- 1 The development is contrary to policies 1, 2 and 17 of National Planning Framework 4 and PMD1 and HD2 of the Local Development Plan 2016 because it would constitute unsustainable, car dependent, sporadic housing development in the open countryside, unrelated to any existing building group and would be out of keeping with the character of the area. This conflict with the development plan is not overridden by any other material considerations.

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