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P L A N N I N G

NEW DWELLINGS EAST OF BUCKLETONS, STICHILL

MR & MRS SHANKS

APRIL 2023

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NEW DWELLINGS EAST OF BUCKLETONS, STICHILL

INTRODUCTION

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- 1.1 This Planning Statement, prepared by Ferguson Planning, is submitted to Scottish Borders Council on behalf of the joint Applicants Mr & Mrs Shanks. This Statement supports an Application for Planning Permission in Principle for the erection of two new dwellings to the east of Buckletons, Stichill.
- 1.2 The application site is located around 1.2km to the north-west of Stichill in a small cluster of existing dwellings. The three existing dwellings Buckletons, Garden Cottage, and Butler's Chase lie to the west of the site, while a further two Lairdshill and Highfield sit to the north – shown in **Fig.1**. The site lies approximately 140 metres east of a junction between two private ways, the private way extending north-east connects to Humley Knowes, a separate but nearby existing Building Group.
- 1.3 The application site currently comprises a grazing field with a shallow slope falling away from north to south and bounded by post and wire fence. The north boundary is defined by hedgerow while the west boundary is reinforced by an adjacent tree belt. The private way which provides vehicle and pedestrian access to the site sits adjacent across the north boundary.
- 1.4 The application site lies in the grounds of the former Stichill House. The existing dwelling Butler's Chase is understood to sit partly on the footprint of the east wing of the country house, which was demolished in the mid 20th Century. No masonry or built fabric remain extant but earthworks are still visible adjacent to the west of Butler's Chase (north of the access track).
- 1.5 Stichill House is not formally designated but is recorded in the Canmore archive (ID: 97477).
- 1.5 The site lies beside but beyond the route of a possible former estate road connecting the country house to Stichill. Similarly, the route is not formally designated but is recorded in the Canmore archive (ID: 353627). It appears that two possible alignments have been identified for the road – neither of which extend close to the heart of the site, although one starts to approach the east boundary.
- 1.6 The application site and its surroundings are considered to comprise an existing Building Group of 5 no. existing dwellings. All existing dwellings within the Building Group are accessed directly from the two private ways which interconnect to the east of the site. Lairdshill is the oldest house in the Building Group and visibly dates from before 1914.
- 1.7 The application site is not an environmentally designated site or part of an environmentally designated site. The nearest environmental designation is understood to be the Hareheugh Craigs Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which lies circa 1.55 kilometres north-west of the site.
- 1.8 The site lies in a pocket of agricultural land classified at 4.1 and therefore is not Prime Quality Agricultural Land (PQAL). It is acknowledged that the pocket is enveloped by PQAL (mainly classified at 3.1) but it does not extend into the exclave which contains the site.



Fig 1: Extract from 10325-1201 Site Location Plan (Source: CSY Architects).

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THE PROPOSAL

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- 2.1 The proposal is for the erection of two dwellings on the site together with access, landscaping, and associated works. The layout and access arrangements of the proposed dwelling are conceptually illustrated on 10325-1202 Existing and Proposed Site Plans, visible in **Fig.2**.
- 2.2 It is proposed to split the site into two new residential curtilages, one to the east of centre and one to the west. A new dwelling will be erected centrally within each new residential curtilage. The proposed dwellings are placed in gardens commensurate in size to nearby existing dwellings. The dwellings will use architectural forms similar to surrounding dwellings, which are mainly of a varied modern style.
- 2.3 An illustrative impression has been prepared presenting a design which fits with the character of other dwellings in the surrounding area and can be seen in **Fig.3**. Should planning permission be granted for the proposed development then the Applicants will develop this concept into a detailed design informed by and in accordance with adopted policy for the further consideration of the Planning Authority.
- 2.4 The proposed dwelling will be serviced by new private arrangements for drainage of foul water. The Applicants propose to connect to the mains water network in the local area.
- 2.5 Access is proposed to each new dwelling across the north boundary from the existing private way. These arrangements mirror those of Buckletons, Garden Cottage, and Butler's Chase which all take access from the existing private way.
- 2.6 As the Application is for Planning Permission in Principle, the requirement to submit detailed drawings to secure the outstanding elements of the design in the next stage of the planning process is acknowledged.



Fig 2: Extract from 10325-1202 Proposed Site Plan (Source: CSY Architects).



Fig 3: Extract from 10325-1203 showing proposed dwellings from south-east perspective (Source: CSY Architects).

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PLANNING POLICY

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3.1 This section provides an overview of key planning policies relevant to the proposed development. The Development Plan comprises National Planning Framework 4 and the Scottish Borders Local Development Plan (2016).

3.2 National Planning Framework 4 sets out national planning policies which are material to the determination of planning applications. Scottish Borders Local Development Plan (2016) contains local planning policy that forms the cornerstone of the adopted planning policy context.

NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 4 (2023)

3.3 The National Planning Framework 4 was adopted in February 2023. The document addresses national planning policy and the Government's approach to achieving a net zero sustainable Scotland by 2045. While Policies 1, 2, 3, 13, 14, & 15 have relevance to the proposal, it is considered that Policies 7, 16, & 17 are particularly pertinent.

3.4 **Policy 7** Historic assets and places addresses context commensurate with that of the application site in criterion o). Policy provides that *"non-designated historic environment assets, places and their setting should be protected and preserved in situ wherever feasible. Where there is potential for non-designated buried archaeological remains to exist below a site, developers will provide an evaluation of the archaeological resource at an early stage so that planning authorities can assess impacts."*

3.5 **Policy 16** Quality Homes is relevant to the proposal. Criterion c) states that *"development proposals for new homes that improve affordability and choice by being adaptable to changing and diverse needs, and which address identified gaps in provision, will be supported. This could include:*

- i. self-provided homes;*
- ii. accessible, adaptable and wheelchair accessible homes;*
- iii. build to rent;*
- iv. affordable homes;*
- v. a range of size of homes such as those for larger families;*
- vi. homes for older people, including supported accommodation, care homes and sheltered housing;*
- vii. homes for people undertaking further and higher education; and*
- viii. homes for other specialist groups such as service personnel."*

3.6 Policy 16 establishes the basis on which Housing Land Supply is to be taken forward and individual criterion in which new housing is supportable in towns and across the countryside. Policy 17 focusses on the principles of new rural homes and sets broad context for rural housing policy.

3.7 **Policy 17** 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 the development."*

Scottish Borders Local Development Plan (2016)

3.8 Local planning policy relevant to the proposal is contained within the Scottish Borders Local Development Plan (2016). Key policies include:

- **Policy PMD1: Sustainability**
- **Policy PMD2: Quality Standards**
- **Policy HD2: Housing in the Countryside**
- **Policy HD3: Protection of Residential Amenity**
- **Policy ED10: Protection of Prime Quality Agricultural Land and Carbon Rich Soils**

Policy PMD1: Sustainability

3.9 The preparation of the Local Development Plan was heavily informed by the acknowledged “*need for action on climate change*” and the Council’s Environmental Strategy, which sit behind the ‘support and encouragement of sustainable development’ across the Borders. Policy PMD1 sets out the “*sustainability principles which underpin all the Plan’s policies*” and that the Council expects to inform development proposals and planning decisions:

- a) the long term sustainable use and management of land
- b) the preservation of air and water quality
- c) the protection of natural resources, landscapes, habitats, and species
- d) the protection of built and cultural resources
- e) the efficient use of energy and resources, particularly non-renewable resources
- f) the minimisation of waste, including waste water and encouragement to its sustainable management
- g) the encouragement of walking, cycling, and public transport in preference to the private car

- h) the minimisation of light pollution
- i) the protection of public health and safety
- j) the support of community services and facilities
- k) the provision of new jobs and support to the local economy
- l) the involvement of the local community in the design, management, and improvement of their environment.

Policy PMD2: Quality Standards

3.10 The Policy sets out a range of sustainability, placemaking and design, accessibility and open space / biodiversity requirements, whereby the proposal must:

- Take appropriate measures to maximise the efficient use of energy and resources, in terms of layout, orientation, construction and energy supply;
- Make provision for sustainable drainage;
- Incorporate appropriate measures for separate storage of waste and recycling;
- Incorporate appropriate landscaping to help integration with the surroundings;
- Create a sense of place, based on a clear understanding of context;
- Be of a scale, massing and height appropriate to the surroundings;
- Be finished externally in materials, the colours and textures of which complement the highest quality of architecture in the locality;
- Be compatible with, and respect, the character of the surrounding area, neighbouring uses and neighbouring built form;

- Be able to be satisfactorily accommodated within the site;
- Provide for appropriate boundary treatments to ensure attractive edges, and to help integration with the surroundings;
- Incorporate access for those with mobility difficulties;
- Not have an adverse impact on road safety in terms of the site access;
- Incorporate adequate access and turning space for vehicles including those used for waste collection purposes; and
- Retain physical or natural features which are important to the amenity or biodiversity of the area.

Policy HD2: Housing in the Countryside

3.11 Section A of Policy HD2 addresses development proposals for housing related to existing Building Groups. The adopted text of section A has been copied below:

“(A) Building Groups

Housing of up to a total of 2 additional dwellings or a 30% increase of the building group, whichever is the greater, associated with existing building groups may be approved provided that:

- c) the Council is satisfied that the site is well related to an existing group of at least three houses or building(s) currently in residential use or capable of conversion to residential use. Where conversion is required to establish a cohesive group of at least three houses, no additional housing will be approved until such a conversion has been implemented,*

- a) the cumulative impact of new development on the character of the building group, and on the landscape and amenity of the surrounding area will be taken into account when determining new applications. Additional development within a building group will be refused if, in conjunction with other developments in the area, it will cause unacceptable adverse impacts,*
- b) any consents for new build granted under this part of this policy should not exceed two housing dwellings or a 30% increase in addition to the group during the Plan period. No further development above this threshold will be permitted.*

In addition, where a proposal for new development is to be supported, the proposal should be appropriate in scale, siting, design, access, and materials, and should be sympathetic to the character of the group.”

Policy HD3: Residential Amenity

3.12 The Policy states that “development that is judged to have an adverse impact on the amenity of existing or proposed residential areas will not be permitted. To protect the amenity and character of these areas, any development will be assessed against:

- a) the principle of the development, including where relevant, any open space that would be lost; and*
- b) the details of the development itself particularly in terms of:*
- i. the scale, form, and type of development in terms of its fit within a residential area,*

- ii. *the impact of the proposed development on the existing and surrounding properties particularly in terms of overlooking, loss of privacy and sunlight provisions. These considerations apply especially in relation to garden ground or 'backland' development,*
- iii. *the generation of traffic or noise,*
- iv. *the level of visual impact."*

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

3.13 Policy ED10 states that *"development, except proposals for renewable energy development, which results in the permanent loss of prime quality agricultural land or significant carbon rich soil reserves, particularly peat, will not be permitted unless:*

- a) *the site is otherwise allocated within this local plan*
- b) *the development meets an established need and no other site is available*
- c) *the development is small and directly related to a rural business."*

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PLANNING ASSESSMENT

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Principle of Development

- 4.1 The application site is considered to lie within the sense of place and setting of an existing Building Group at the former Stichill House. The Building Group comprises five existing dwellings – Buckletons, Butler’s Chase, Lairdshill, Highfield, and Garden Cottage (as seen in **Fig.4**). Lairdshill is unique in its Victorian origins, while the other three dwellings date from the late 20th and early 21st Centuries.
- 4.2 The Building Group lies in the in-step of a junction between two private ways, partly enclosed by belts of trees to the north and east. Large agricultural fields lie beyond the existing Building Group to the south and west. The application site and all existing dwellings are arranged around existing private ways. The private ways date back to the 19th Century (evidenced in **Fig.5.**) and have given structure to development for more than a century. It is significant that both the junction of private ways (enclosing from the east) and the Walled Garden (enclosing from the west) remain extant in the local area.
- 4.3 Together the private ways, small woodlands, and established field pattern define the setting and sense of place of the Building Group.
- 4.4 The application site sits in the east portion of the building group adjacent to the existing dwelling Buckletons and opposite Butler’s Chase and Lairdshill across the private way. The west boundary of the site is shared with Buckletons, while the north boundary is defined by the private way. The east boundary stands distinct from the adjacent large agricultural field – which represents countryside surrounding the Building Group. The site is enclosed with the Building Group to the west of the tree belt which shelters the junction of the private ways and significantly contributes to the setting of the existing Building Group.
- 4.5 It is considered that new tree and hedge planting along the south and east boundaries of the site would enclose the site and delineate the new residential curtilages from surrounding fields. Given the position of the site in relation to the nearby existing dwellings and the natural enclosing landform, the site is considered to be well related to the existing Building Group and to accord with criteria a) of section (A).
- 4.6 A review of the Council’s online planning records has confirmed that no new or existing dwellings have been consented in the existing Building Group at the former Stichill House within the current LDP period. The proposal is for the erection of two dwellings within the setting of an existing Building Group comprising five dwellings. While details of appearance, layout, and scale are deferred for future consideration, the type and form of development proposed are considered to be acceptable on the site.



Fig 4: Annotated aerial image of existing Building Group at the former Stichill House with application site in red wash and natural boundaries illustrated (in orange).

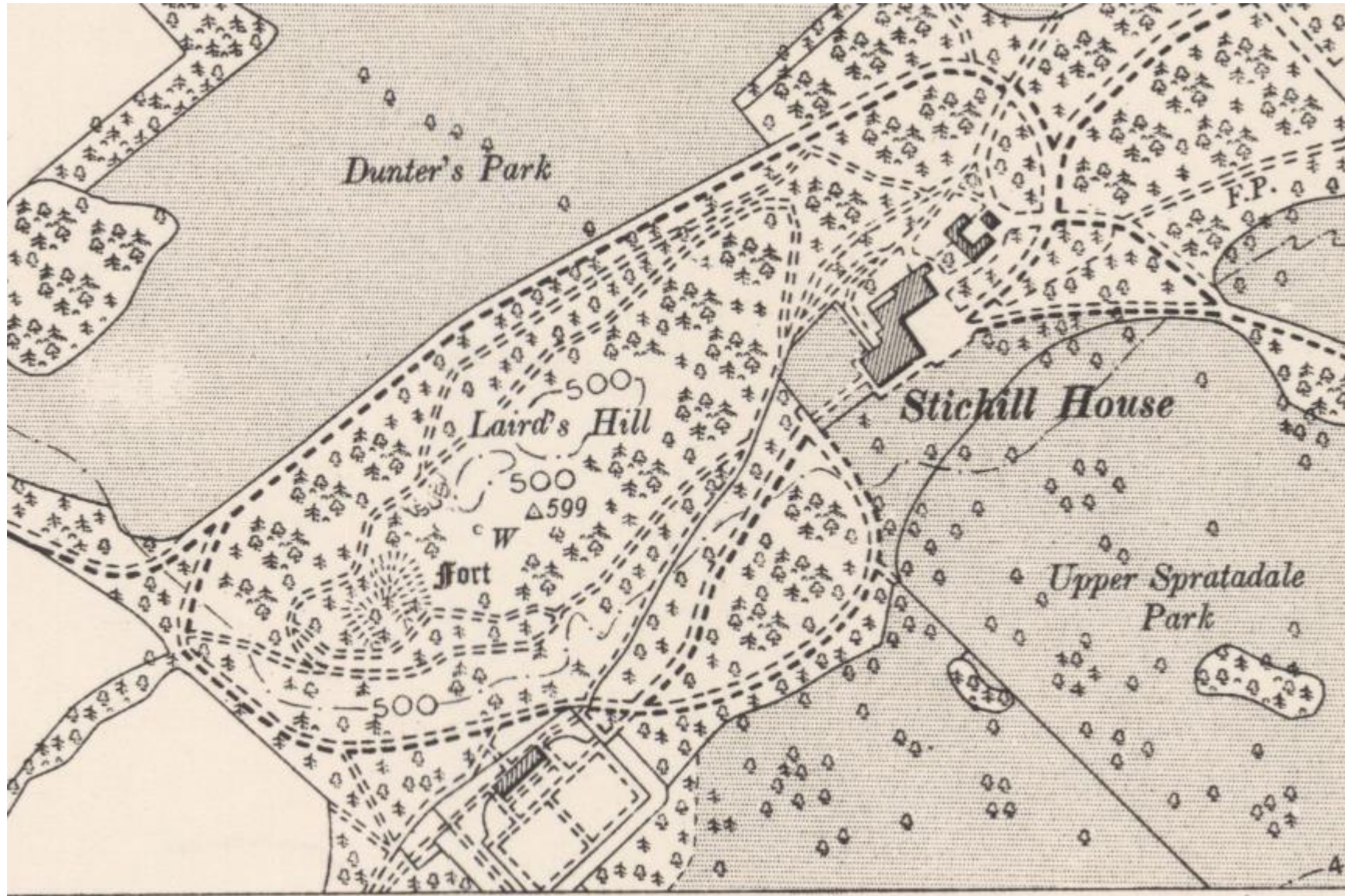


Fig 5: Local extract from Ordnance Survey Map 1897.

- 4.7 Views of the site would largely be in profile with the other existing dwellings in the Building Group. Views from the west would be largely obstructed by the summit and slopes of Laird's Hill (peak standing 187 metres above sea level). The established woodland upon the hill and its slopes would obscure almost all other vantage of the site from the west. From the north the proposed dwellings would be seen as part of a cohesive cluster of houses, together with the existing dwellings. Indeed, it is considered that views of the proposed dwellings from the north would be framed and partly obscured by the existing dwellings – Butler's Chase, Lairdshill, and Highfield.
- 4.8 Due to rising topography and the scattering of trees locally only glanced views of the existing Building Group can be obtained from the B6364 to the east. The views that can be seen are of a cluster of houses sat amongst trees. The character of this vista would be unchanged by the proposal.
- 4.9 Views from the south are largely obscured by mature, established trees contained in Bank Park and the Farrock Plantation. The proposed dwellings would be seen from the south as a row of houses together with Buckletons. The other three existing dwellings in the Building Group would form the background of the vista. New hedgerow and tree planting along the south and east boundaries of the site would further contextualise views of the proposed dwellings.
- 4.10 Given the limited landscape impacts associated with the proposed development, it is considered that an "unacceptable adverse impact" would not be created and that the proposal accords with criteria b) of section (A).
- 4.11 The Building Group at the former Stichill House comprises five existing dwellings, extension by two additional dwellings is allowed for by the Policy. The proposal is considered to accord with criteria c) of section (A) as no new dwellings have been consented within the current LDP period and two new dwellings are proposed.
- 4.12 The proposal is considered to represent both "*self-provided homes*" (item i.) and dwellings suited to the beneficial occupation of "*larger families*" item v. under criterion c) of NPF4 Policy 16.
- 4.13 It is considered that there is no prospect of the proposed dwellings being delivered by a housebuilder or other corporate developer. Development of the new dwellings would be delivered on self-build basis – either by the Applicant or a successor in title. Therefore, the proposed dwellings are considered to satisfy item i. of criterion c) as they represent self-provided homes.
- 4.14 It is conceptually proposed that residential accommodation would be arranged over two levels in both new dwellings. The exact design is likely to take the form of 1.5 or 1.75 storey dwellings. It is likely that three or four bedrooms would be provided in each house. However, the detailed design could reserve the option of five bedrooms in two storey design if the Planning Authority considered it appropriate and necessary. While five bedrooms are more easily be compatible with use by larger families, three and four bedroom houses are considered to be suitable for occupation by larger families and to satisfy item v. of criterion c).

Map contents

Maps Legend

National scale land capability for agriculture

- 1 - Land capable of producing a very wide range of crops.
- 2 - Land capable of producing a wide range of crops.
 - 3.1 - Land capable of producing consistently high yields of a narrow range of crops and/ or moderate yields of a wider range. Short grass leys are common.
 - 3.2 - Land capable of average production though high yields of barley, oats and grass can be obtained. Grass leys are common.
 - 4.1 - Land capable of producing a narrow range of crops, primarily grassland with short arable breaks of forage crops and cereal.
 - 4.2 - Land capable of producing a narrow range of crops, primarily on grassland with short arable breaks of forage crops.
 - 5.1 - Land capable of use as improved grassland. Few problems with pasture establishment and maintenance and potential high yields.
 - 5.2 - Land capable of use as improved grassland. Few problems with pasture establishment but may be difficult to maintain.
 - 5.3 - Land capable of use as improved grassland. Pasture deteriorates quickly.
 - 6.1 - Land capable of use as rough grazings with a high proportion of palatable plants.
 - 6.2 - Land capable of use as rough grazings with moderate quality plants.
 - 6.3 - Land capable of use as rough grazings with low quality plants.
 - 7 - Land of very limited agricultural value.

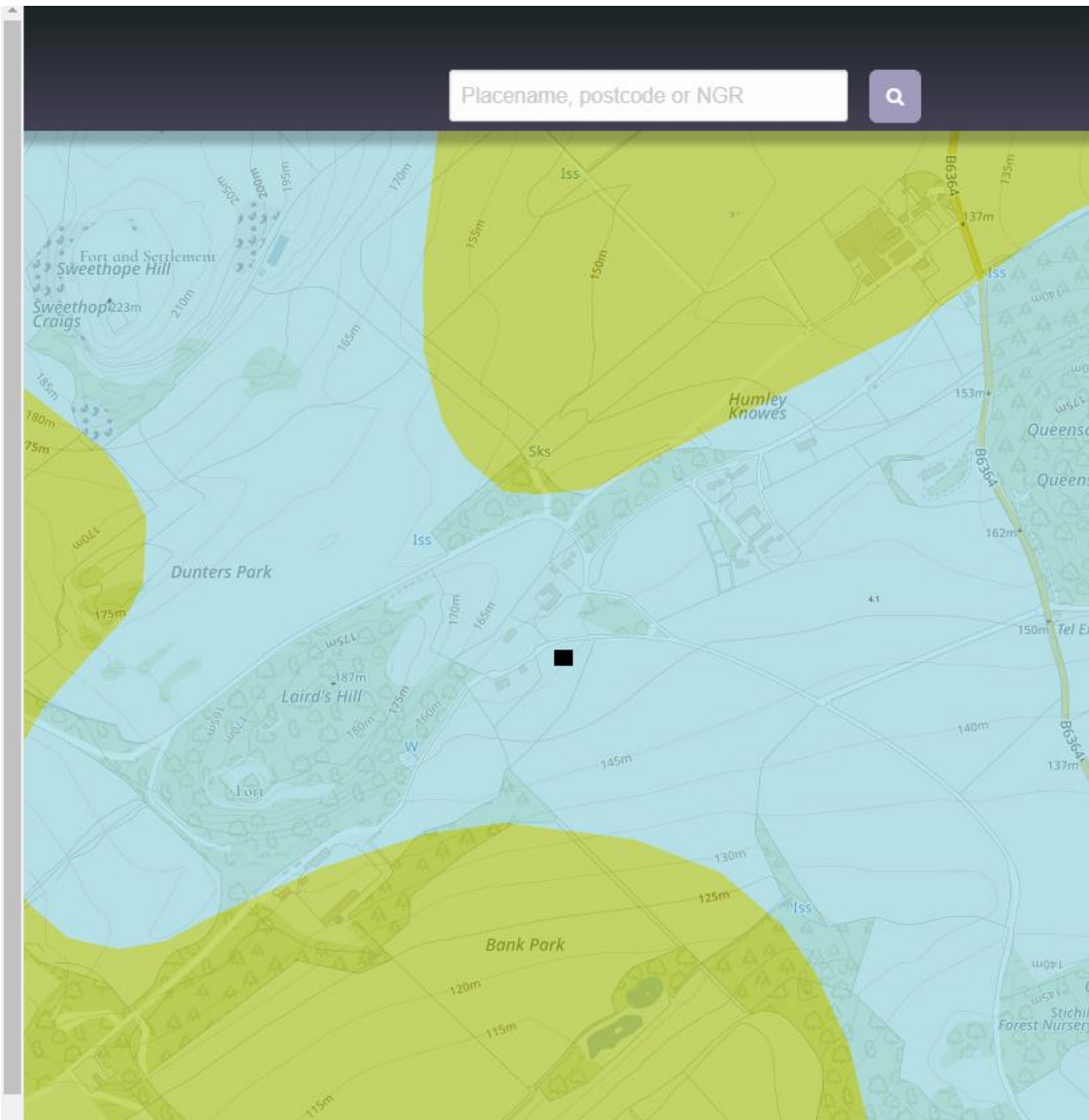


Fig 6: Extract from National Scale Land Capability for Agriculture Map. The application site (position marked by black rectangle) and the rest of the land north of Stichill can be seen to sit in Class 4.1 (Source: <https://soils.environment.gov.scot/>)

4.15 The proposal comprises the erection of two new dwellings upon a site which is well related an existing Building Group lying within the local setting and defined sense of place. There have been no new dwellings consented within the current LDP period and it is considered that there are no associated significant cumulative impacts. Therefore, the principle of development is considered to be acceptable as the proposal accords with section (A) of Policy HD2 and Policy 16 of NPF4.

Soil Quality

4.16 It is recognised that loss of Prime Quality Agricultural Land (Classes 1, 2, & 3.1) is resisted by Policy ED10.

4.17 However, there is no Prime Quality Agricultural Land on-site, as shown in **Fig.6**. Therefore, the proposal does not represent loss of Prime Quality Agricultural Land and is considered to accord with Policy ED10.

Archaeology

4.18 The site sits in the environs of the former Stichill House. While remains of the country house are very unlikely to extend into the site, it is acknowledged that there is low potential for the existence of a section of former road dating from the 17th or 18th Century on-site.

4.19 Criterion o) of NPF4 Policy 7 sets out that potential impact on non-designated buried assets should be assessed during the planning process. To this effect, the Applicants would be prepared to accept conditioning of submission of a Written Scheme of Investigation in a grant of Planning Permission in Principle. It is considered that use of a condition is reasonable and proportionate to the scale of development proposed, in accordance with Policy 7 of NPF4.

Access and Parking

4.20 Access is proposed across the north boundary of the site from the existing private way adjacent. The nearby existing dwellings Buckletons, Garden Cottage, and Butler's Chase all take access from the private way, which both residential and agricultural traffic use frequently.

4.21 The private way is surfaced in crushed stone and assorted aggregate. The private way connects with the public road network at its junction with the B6364 almost exactly 1 kilometre north-east of the site. New access to the proposed dwellings from the private way is considered to be safe and acceptable.

4.22 It is proposed to serve each new dwelling with two parking spaces within respective residential curtilages. These arrangements are considered to be consistent with standards expected by the Council as Public Roads Authority.

Site Servicing

4.23 The proposed dwelling will be serviced by connection to the mains water network. Foul and surface water drainage will be managed by connection to private means. The Applicant is content to secure connection details via condition.

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CONCLUSION

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- 5.1 Ferguson Planning has been appointed by the Applicants to submit an Application for Planning Permission in Principle for the erection of two new dwellings together with access, landscaping, and associated works to the east of Buckletons, Stichill.
- 5.2 The proposal represents the enlargement of an existing Building Group by two new dwellings upon a site which is well related to the existing dwellings and within both the setting and sense of place of the Building Group. No new dwellings have been consented within the current LDP period or the period of the previous Consolidated Local Plan (adopted 2011) and there are no significant cumulative impacts associated with the proposal. Therefore, the principle of development is considered to be acceptable as the proposal accords with section (A) of Policy HD2.
- 5.3 The proposal represents both provision of self-build homes and houses which would lend themselves well to occupation by larger families. Each of these criteria is directly supported in Policy 16 of NPF4, with which the proposal sits in accordance.
- 5.4 The application site lies close to but outside land designated as Prime Quality for the purposes of agriculture. Therefore, the proposal accords with Policy ED10. It is considered to be unlikely that any archaeological remains exist on-site. A condition requiring a Written Scheme of Investigation would be accepted as part of a Planning Permission in Principle.
- 5.5 New accesses to the site are proposed from the private way adjacent. Two parking spaces per dwelling are included within the proposal. The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in transport terms.
- 5.6 It is considered that the proposal is in accordance with relevant adopted policy of the Local Development Plan and is not afflicted by any other material considerations. It is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

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