

ADDITIONAL REPRESENTATIONS FROM NETHER WYRESDALE PARISH COUNCIL

IN RESPONSE TO

APPEAL APP/U2370/W/18/3203571

AGAINST REFUSAL OF APPLICATION 17/00344/FULMAJ FOR

ERECTION OF 31 DWELLINGS WITH ASSOCIATED ACCESS, OPEN SPACE AND
LANDSCAPING

AT

LAND ADJOINING GUBBERFORD LANE, SCORTON LANCASHIRE

DATE : AUGUST 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Parish Council has considered the impact of the proposed development in considerable detail and produced an Executive Summary within SO1 and SO2, encapsulating the evidence contained within those documents. This additional document offers further representations and a series of conclusions relative to each of the key issues identified.

By way of an overall brief summary, Nether Wyresdale Parish Council formally objects to the proposed development in view of it being unnecessary and locationally inappropriate. This is in respect of Wyre Local Plan as it is evolving, in its strategic approach to the distribution of development and equally, its localised impacts. The Local Plan now provides for an appropriate distribution of development, sufficient to meet its housing requirements, until the plan is reviewed following adoption, at a future date. The granting of permission for housing on the site would result in a 'dispersed form and pattern of development' to an inappropriate location, mostly relying in car borne transport. The site would be relatively remote from community provision, services and employment uses. The reason for refusal advanced by Wyre Council is supported.

The proposed development is not considered to offer the sustainable virtues as alleged in respect of its social, economic and environmental benefits.

The planning authority is able to demonstrate a 5 year housing supply. There is no necessity for the development.

Irrespective of the 5 year housing supply position, the Parish Council is of the firm opinion, that the development would be unacceptable on this highly sensitive site. The council have underestimated the predicted harmful effects. The development would result in:

- A scale of development that would be inherently inappropriate and disproportionate to the character of Scorton as it has historically developed by way of an appropriate pattern of incremental, integrated and organic development.
- A significantly detrimental effect on the inherent, scenic landscape quality of the site and its contribution to the countryside setting of Scorton.
- A visually disconnected, detached suburban form of development, which would be visually detrimental to the character of the locality and its relationship to Scorton in as a result of its form, character and appearance.
- A form of development that would be wholly detrimental to the character, appearance and setting of designated heritage assets.

Any future development needs for Scorton should be based on an assessment of locally demonstrated needs and if justified, be of a form and scale such that it could be properly integrated with the form and character of the village.

The Parish Council has major concerns about the impact of traffic that would be generated by the development on local highway conditions. These are not merely in respect of highway capacity issues. It is also based on the practicality of vehicular movement due to congestion and the impacts on the amenity and ambience of the village environment resulting from increased traffic movements. The Parish Council would also support the objection of the highway authority in respect of the adverse impacts of the development on highway safety.

The range of factors identified in the statements produced by the Parish Council, on behalf of the community, point to the highly detrimental effects that this development would bring. It would result in an irreversible form of development that would have a permanent impact on the character and setting of this conservation village that has been an integral and essential element of its sense of place since its establishment.

The detrimental effects of the proposed development significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits suggested by the planning authority and developer.

In the light of all of these adverse effects the Parish Council respectfully requests that the appeal be dismissed for the reasons advanced by the Parish Council and other objectors to the development.

INTRODUCTION.

1.1 This statement constitutes the response to the appeal submitted by Applethwaite Homes following the refusal of planning permission by Wyre Council dated the 28th March 2018. The written responses to the proposed development include:

- The initial response from the Parish Council to the proposed development in the form of a written response offered in return. *Appendix 1*
- The formal response made to Wyre Council, in which significant grounds for the refusal of the application were set out in detail. (SO1 - dated 8th June 2017, including the covering letter)
- The formal response made to Wyre Council setting out an objection to the development with reference to highway and traffic issues. (SO2 – also dated 8th June 2017)

Documents (SO1) and (SO2) will be with the appeal papers already forwarded to the Inspectorate

1.2 In its response to the developer's initial consultation, regarding the potential development of the site (*Appendix 1*), the Parish Council raised particular concerns in respect of planning principles, as well as specific detailed matters. It was also suggested that the proposals be submitted by the developer to the community, as advised in National Planning Policy/Guidance. This advice was not taken (Para. 124-5 NPPF). The Parish Council also stated that it would offer its full comments in the light of any application being submitted and in response to representations made by the community. It will be seen that the initial concerns of the Parish Council were formulated into specific objections to the development (SO1 and SO2).

Within this statement and where appropriate, cross reference is made to the original statement of objection by the letters 'SO1 or SO2'.

1.3 The Parish Council was disappointed to learn, on 28th March, that despite its submission of well supported evidence covering a range of material planning issues, the particular reasons for refusal related only to highway safety and accessibility objections. The Parish Council do, however, support the Borough Council - and de facto the County Council - in this respect.

1.4 The Parish Council appreciate the need to provide for development across the Borough in the appropriate locations. It has not, at any point, passed any resolution to object to development within the Parish or Scorton that would be physically well related, proportionate in scale and character, would meet genuinely derived local needs and be properly integrated into the fabric of the village. It takes this stance as the village is very small and has evolved and adapted slowly, incrementally and organically over time. This

pattern of ‘development’ should be the guiding principle in order to retain its long term character and integrity. The resultant and problematic issue with this particular development proposal relates to its location, disproportionate scale, visual impact and detrimental effect on the rural landscape - both in itself and in respect of the role it plays as providing an attractive and important setting for this historic rural settlement.

1.5 The position of the Parish Council is that its previous grounds of objection, as set out in its statements referenced above (SO1 and SO2), remain fully valid and that it respectfully asks the appointed Inspector to take these representations into account in considering the substance of the appeal. However, this additional statement has been made in the light of:

- The publication of the revised National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) as relevant to the proposed development
- The Statement of Case from the appellant including additional material in support
- The report and conclusions of the local planning authority with regard to the application
- The latest position with regards to the emerging Wyre Local Plan
- A re-emphasis of certain fundamental principles of objection

1.6 The Parish Council and the community it represents, has been advised that as a ‘third party’ it has an important part to play in the planning appeals process. It has also been reassured that in consideration of the appeal, the range of planning issues and objections it raised to the application will be fully considered and that the outcome will not merely be determined on the basis of the particular reason for refusal cited by the planning authority.

1.7 The Parish Council, in submitting this statement, has taken into account the overwhelming views of the local community and other representations made in respect of the proposed development. It has also taken advice from professional sources to assist it in articulating its objections to the development. In respect of individual community representations (and indeed those made by visitors), it will be noted that the vast majority of them are not objecting on the basis of the development having a direct impact on their property but rather, the potential impact of it on the character and appearance of Scorton as an entity. Other issues are also raised, including traffic conditions in and around the village, which should form a baseline for the consideration of development on this site.

1.8 For the purposes of this additional statement, the objections of the Parish Council are based on a series of Key issues, presented in a summary format. Ostensibly, these views, on the appropriateness of this development and its potential impact on the village of Scorton, are at total variance with the conclusions drawn by the planning authority (apart from those cited in the reason for refusal). De facto, the case for the development as presented by the appellant’s agent in the Statement of Case is challenged.

- 1.9 The objections raised as to the physical impact of the development on the character and appearance of the village, to its landscape setting and designated heritage assets, are inextricably linked. However, for the purposes of clarity and explanation within this statement, the relevant issues have been considered in turn. These are generally cross-referenced with the relevant supporting material contained within statements SO1 and SO2, with the appropriate section or particular paragraph quoted.
- 1.10 The criticisms of the proposed development of the site are not aimed at the developer per se and the product offered rather, the consequences of this form of development on this particularly sensitive site.

The Statement is arranged with reference to relevant issues, as follows.

1. **Issue 1.** The need for the development, 5 year housing supply, local plan and sustainability issues.
2. **Issue 2.** The scale of the development relative to Scorton.
3. **Issue 3.** The value of the site in relation to the character and appearance of the locality and village setting.
4. **Issue 4.** The predicted impacts of development on the present site.
5. **Issue 5.** The predicted impact on Heritage Assets.

ASSESSMENT OF ISSUES

2. ISSUE 1. THE NEED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT: 5 YEAR HOUSING SUPPLY, LOCAL PLAN AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES.

2.1 At the initial meeting between the developer’s advisors and the planning authority, it was agreed at that time, that Wyre Council was unable to meet its 5 year housing supply requirement. It is not clear how these circumstances at the time influenced the planning authority in its approach to it viewing the site as suitable for residential development. The Planning Officer’s report reveals how the development of this site, for 31 dwellings, would make a contribution to boosting the supply of available homes across the Borough. The report seeks to balance this opportunity with an assessment of its potential effects.

2.2 With a lack of a deliverable 5 year housing supply, the principle of the ‘tilted balance’ is triggered. It is the position of the Parish Council that notwithstanding the absence of a

5 year supply and the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development', the potential impact of a development of this nature, in such a sensitive location, should be assessed with great rigour. The benefits of housing should be balanced against an analysis of the range of planning considerations, to assess whether the provision of housing is significantly and demonstrably outweighed by other factors. With the support of the statements presented to the Borough Council, both in response to the planning application for the site and within this statement, the PC consider that the detrimental effects of the development are of such significance - and are demonstrated as such - that planning permission should be withheld irrespective of the '5 year position'.

2.3 Following the Examination into the Draft Local Plan, the Planning Inspector has issued 'Post Hearing Advice' to the planning authority, without prejudice to his final future report, dated 5th July 2018. This advice suggested that further Main Modifications to the Plan would probably be required, such that it could be considered 'sound'. In its response of 30th July, the Council accepted the thrust of this advice and responded to the effect that the recommendations would result in appropriate revisions to the emerging Local Plan, which would be re-published, as it now has.

2.4 In essence, the publication of the revised plan, in taking the Inspectors advice, has resulted in significant amendments to some of the housing allocations with upward revisions to the capacity of various sites and the reduction and deletion of others. An early review of the adopted plan has been pledged. Quite rightly, the Council are looking to have the plan adopted as soon as possible so that the approach to 'decision taking' can be properly 'plan led'. This would give assurances to developers and importantly local communities. In respect of the revisions to the local plan, as now published, the position remains in respect of Scorton. This is one of retaining the village boundary, as defined, and any proposals for development outside it will be judged against Countryside Policy SP4. Given the probable 'soundness' of the plan in the light of the published revisions to the emerging local plan, Policy SP4 should carry significant weight.

2.3 Most recently, Wyre Council has issued a statement, supported by statistical evidence, that it can now demonstrate a 5.19 year housing supply. This being the case, it would add to the argument, as advanced by the Parish Council and others, that the development of this site is not necessary, irrespective of its undesirable environmental effects. Thus the 'tilted balance' would not apply.

2.4 It is of course fully appreciated by the Parish Council, that sufficient housing land should be provided to meet the Objectively Assessed Need, but that such development should be sited in genuinely sustainable, accessible and physically appropriate locations. In its objection to the development of this particular site, the PC is of the opinion that these tests would not be met. In the broadest terms, the site is not well related to the full range of community facilities and amenities that should be considered essential to support a residential development of this scale and nature. It would also generate

significant car-borne trips. Thus, the reason for refusal of the Borough Council is supported. The proposed development in this location is opportunistic, rather than part of a planned distribution of development through the local plan process. Being a site that could potentially accommodate 31 dwellings, 22 of which would be available on the open market, 9 would be affordable, this number based on the 30% ratio policy requirement, rather than locally generated needs.

- 2.5 From an economic perspective, whilst the construction of dwellings would support the construction industry with its potential spin off benefits, this would equally apply to development in all locations, noting that significant development is planned or under construction at nearby Garstang and other locations along the A6 corridor. Moreover, the local economic and social benefits to Scorton and the immediate rural economy from the development would not present major benefits, since local facilities are at present vital and viable e.g. the village store, school, cafes, the agricultural community, tourism uses, other service providers and local businesses. Through its local plan proposals, Wyre Council has not proposed any development around Scorton with the specific objective of supporting or sustaining vulnerable rural community provision. The Parish Council further considers that that the development would not be environmentally sustainable in view of its physical and adverse visual effects on the local landscape, village character and designated heritage assets.

Conclusion

The emerging Local Plan, as it is now crystallising, and in particular taking account of the Inspectors post hearing advice, has resulted in the further main modifications to the Plan. The Council, has now re-appraised some of its allocations in respect of potential capacity and locational suitability. The village of Scorton is to retain its village boundary and beyond it, Countryside Policies apply. The up to date publication by the Council of its position relative to its 5 year housing supply demonstrates that sufficient land is available to meet its needs without the release of sites that are considered to be inappropriate. However, The Parish Council has sought to demonstrate, in its previous representations and in this statement that notwithstanding the 5 year supply issue, the proposed development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of housing on the site. However, the provision of more sustainable sites across the Borough and notably around the local service centre of Garstang, in addition to the 5 year housing supply position, further obviates the need for the proposed development.

3. ISSUE 2. THE SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT RELATIVE TO SCORTON.

- 3.1 The introductory section to this statement identifies how the village has developed and evolved organically by way of small scale incremental additions. This has resulted in the rural village retaining its essential small scale character set within a unique landscape setting. (This issue is discussed further in the following sections). This characteristic is illustrated in SO1 (Para 6.7) which shows an aerial view of Scorton. SO1 Para. 7.7,

illustrates that by far the greater part of the built fabric of the village and related open spaces are contained within the historically significant part – the designated conservation area – with relatively small elements lying outside. This historic character is the dominant determining characteristic of the village as a whole, containing a variety of building typologies and features established over a considerable timespan. This analysis demonstrates the point that the village has evolved and adapted slowly, incrementally and organically since its foundation.

- 3.2 The approaches to the village from all directions reveal the importance of its overall rural setting and also the relatively short distances between its built edges and the nucleated core. These features are particularly relevant since such experiences present the overwhelming impression of a small scale, contained rural village and not a settlement where a relatively large scale, unrelated suburban expansion would seem appropriate. This present character is a critical feature against which any development proposals should be subject to the utmost scrutiny.
- 3.3 In the Inspector’s post hearing advice – main modifications and related matters – referenced above, at Section 2 the issue of residential allocations at Forton is considered.

At Para. 35, The Inspector remarks:

“Moreover, development on these sites would be poorly related to the existing settlement structure and could not form an ‘organic extension’ to Forton appearing as satellite housing estates.”

At Para. 37,

“I acknowledge the Parish Council’s preference for some of the southern parcel to be developed rather than the westernmost parcel. However, although the latter would have some landscape impacts it would be capable of being designed as an ‘organic extension’, would provide scope for an extension of the primary school and would be closer to village facilities.”

Whilst of course these comments relate to Forton, which is a larger settlement than Scorton, it is interesting that nonetheless, the Inspector considers the appropriateness of the development with reference to its ‘organic relationship’ as a conditioning factor and critical of a situation that could result in satellite housing estates.

As described in SO1 and in this statement, in the context of Scorton, the appeal proposal would not result in an organic, well related and integrated form of development, considered to be an important planning principle. It would appear as being a ‘detached satellite’ housing development, relative to the present character, layout and overall form of the village.

3.4 The illustration at SO1 Para. 6.7, illustrates this point with reference to the form and scale of the village and the location and relative size of the appeal proposal's built development footprint.

Conclusion

As demonstrated in this section and in the supporting SO1, the scale of the proposed development is considered to be disproportionate and locationally inappropriate. Its scale and location could not be regarded as an organic, incremental form of development in the context of Scorton.

4. ISSUE 3. THE VALUE OF THE SITE IN RELATION TO THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE LOCALITY AND VILLAGE SETTING.

4.1 The contribution that the site presently makes to the character and appearance of the rural locality, its relationship to the village of Scorton and its potential consequential loss, as a result of the proposed development, is considered by the PC to be a significant and material consideration.

4.2 The Statement of objection by the PC, in respect of the application (SO1), sets out in some detail the essential and unique location and character of Scorton as a free standing rural settlement. It was founded as a mill village and has evolved incrementally since its initial establishment, largely through the development of previously developed sites, within what might be termed the bounds of the village envelope. Obvious examples include the development of Priory Gardens and Mill Lane, the latter being the original mill site. The only general exceptions relate to the development of Brook Avenue in the 1960's, and Wyresdale Crescent, a post war development for local occupation. This general form of containment has resulted in the free-standing quality of Scorton possesses and its attractive integration with the surrounding landscape of both the lowland plain and the Bowland Fells, which rise above it to the east.

4.3 The landscape setting of the village should be considered as a whole (Section 5, SO1). The railway embankment of the West Coast Main Line forms a very firm edge and visual barrier from approaches to the village from the A6, both along Gubberford Lane and Station Lane. The sense of arrival and immediate landscape setting of the village is, therefore, noticeably apparent at the point where of observer/receptor passes beneath the railway arches, referred to in SO1 as 'portals'. From these points the landscape opens out, combining to provide an immediate relationship with Scorton. The appeal site and the panoramas of rural landscape, also when viewed from Station Lane, form part of the essential open rural landscape setting of the village set against the backdrop of the fells. (Illustrated at Paras. 5.7 and 5.10). The approach from the Bridge along Gubberford Lane to the village core is characterised by a transition from open attractive undulating landscape (appeal site), a backdrop of mature trees, open green infrastructure and specimen trees and hedgerow, singular buildings with landscaped

grounds, culminating in the intensification of development at the nucleated core of the village. This physical ‘gradation’ from rural landscape to village centre is an essential characteristic of the village, conservation area and the setting of St. Peters Church. (SO1, Section 5). The appeal site plays a significant role in this overall character and the development of the appeal site as proposed, would be seriously detrimental to these overall relationships and qualities.

4.4 In the planning officer’s delegated report at paragraph 8.7 and 8.8, the following extract is to be found:

“8.7 Visual Impacts and Impacts upon the Landscape

*“8.8 Saved Policy SP14 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that development proposals are compatible with adjacent existing land uses and should be acceptable in the local landscape in terms of its scale, mass, style siting and use of materials. Amongst other criteria the policy goes on to state that any development proposals should respect and accommodate existing important features of the site such as preserved trees, biological and heritage features. **Significant concerns were raised with the applicant at the pre application stage as to the potential visual harm the development would have on the character and natural beauty of the landscape.** As a result, the proposed scheme, as submitted, has been substantially reduced and the development has been set in from the eastern boundary adjacent to the M6 and also the western boundary adjacent Gubberford Lane by 35m”.*

In analysing this statement, the potential harm of development on the *natural beauty* of the landscape is acknowledged and identified. It is stated that the development was to be reduced and set back from the road frontage as a way of, presumably, making it acceptable, when otherwise it may not have been. The reference to Policy SP14 in the report refers to development being acceptable in respect of mass, scale etc. There is nothing in the report to suggest that the principle of whether *any* development on the site would be appropriate, but rather one of limiting or reducing its impact. This is rather surprising since there were such widespread comments from the public and others organisations about the landscape value of the site and resultant impact of the development, none less so than by the Parish Council.

4.5 The appeal site *as a whole* is considered by the Parish Council to be an important element of the wider landscape character, being notably attractive in its own right and in providing a setting for the conservation village. The application site does not benefit from any particular designation other than ‘open countryside’ within the emerging Local Plan. However, the site is considered to offer inherent visual qualities, having a ‘parkland setting’ with an undulating topography, preserved specimen trees that have an attractive natural setting relationship with the landform and boundary hedgerows. This ‘quality’ is acknowledged in the delegated report and its value is further recognised when considering the number and content of local objections – and those of visitors to the area - to the development.

4.6 Paragraph 170 of the NPPF refers to ‘Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment’. It states, inter alia:

“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

*b) **Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside**, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland”*

This site is considered by the Parish Council, local community and others, to be a valued landscape. Moreover, it should be considered as having ‘intrinsic beauty’ in recognition of its particular qualities, both in the context of the locality, the setting of Scorton and its relationship with the Forest of Bowland to the east. (SO 5.17). Gubberford Lane provides views across the site to the Bowland Fells for visitors and general users and as a consequence, the site should be considered as having an interconnected relationship with the setting of the AONB. Policy SP5 of the Emerging Local Plan states:

1. The Forest of Bowland AONB will be protected from any development which would damage or adversely affect its character, appearance and setting.

It is considered that the proposed development, would result in the loss of this important landscape relationship, presently appreciated by the users/receptors of Gubberford Lane, across the site towards the background fells. It is considered that such an intrusion would be detrimental to this aspect of AONB setting.

4.7 The argument may be advanced elsewhere, that in view of the lack of a specific landscape designation, beyond the general countryside notation within the local plan, its visual quality is unremarkable. However, the Parish Council agree with the planning officers comments in the report that refers specifically to the ‘*character and natural beauty of the landscape*’ and it being ‘*highly picturesque*’. (Para 8.9 of the report).

4.8 Reference to the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual impact assessment (GLVIA-3) states at Page 83 Para 5.26 that:

‘The fact that an area of landscape is not designated either nationally or locally does not mean that it does not have any value’.

Page 85 Para 5.29, bullet 2 states that:

‘Areas of landscape whose character is judged to be intact and in good condition, and where scenic quality, wildness or tranquillity and natural or cultural heritage features make a particular contribution to the landscape... are likely to be highly valued.’

The site sits astride and is visually related to Gubberford Lane, which is the principal access route to the village, its visitor facilities, is a genuine Forest of Bowland gateway, is part of the National Cycle Route 6 and contains the important footpath, the Wyre Way (Long distance footpath)/Millennium Way. Thus the importance of the landscape character of the site at present is essential as it presents a particular aspect of countryside setting to a series of 'receptor groups', who visit the village as an attractive destination and the surrounding countryside for recreational purposes, related to its inherent landscape quality.

For the reasons set out in this statement and in particular SO1, the application site is considered to have intrinsic, scenic value and as such makes a significant and integral contribution to the broader rural landscape, immediate setting of the village and its heritage assets, with which it interacts. The effects of the proposed development would result in an irreversible loss of part of this important rural landscape.

4.9 In the context of the LVIA supplied by the applicant, the study essentially concerns itself with the impact of the development rather than assessing the contributory role the site plays *at present* as an integral part of the character and quality of the locality.

4.10 Within the context of the emerging Local Plan, the site is the subject to a 'countryside designation' – Policy SP4 (i). The appellants seek to make the case that this is a consequence of 'highway constraints' only and that in the absence of such constraints, development around the village would in normal circumstances be allowed. The 'highway' constraints issue has thus resulted in the 'tight' settlement boundary being proposed around the village. The Parish Council, in its representations to the draft Local Plan, sought to make the case that there should be other factors that should influence the positioning of a settlement boundary, including village setting, conservation issues and other factors. This is also a view shared by 'Save our Scorton Residents Association' in its representations on the planning application and response to the Draft Local Plan.

Conclusion

4.11 The PC consider that whilst the local planning authority agree that the site has particular qualities and natural beauty, it nonetheless considers that the benefits of residential development outweigh its protection. The Parish Council considers that its intrinsic qualities have been undervalued in respect of its significance, in particular, the strategic contribution it makes to the character, quality of the locality and setting of the village. The overall conclusions in this regard are set out in SO1, Para. 5.21. The site is rightly protected in the emerging local plan as 'countryside' and the provisions of policy SP4 should be applied.

5 ISSUE 4. THE PREDICTED IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT ON THE SITE AND VILLAGE.

5.1 This Statement and the SO1 submission have sought to draw out the fundamental issue of the importance of the site with its attractive open landscape character as being a significant, contributory and integral feature of the locality. It follows that its loss would

be significantly detrimental. Statement SO1 considers this at length. (Section 6). A consideration of the impact of the proposed development on the setting and character of the village is very much related to the impact of the development on the village as designated conservation area. They are very much one and the same. The issue of the impact on the designated heritage assets as a result of the potential development, bring with them additional considerations from a legislative, policy assessment point of view. Consequently the issue of the impact of the development on Heritage assets was considered in a separate chapter within SO1 and further within this statement (issue 5).

- 5.2 SO1 highlights how Scorton has developed organically and incrementally over time, with small scale, proportionate physical expansion and brown field conversions. (SO 6.1). The lengthy analysis within SO1 describes the physical characteristics and evolutionary form of the village. It also explains that the character of the village is dominated by its historically developed layout in response to social and economic factors. Importantly, the evaluation describes, with illustrations and at some detail, how the village form and layout extends from its nucleated core outwards. The distinctive form of development presents a coherent unity with subtle variety reflecting its evolutionary growth. (Para. 6.11 and 7.7).
- 5.3 The form of the village is such that there is a ‘gradation’ from the nucleated core southwards towards the appeal site with a ‘loosening of development’, where the development form becomes more dispersed with the presence of open spaces, trees and landscaping becoming the dominant characteristic. In turn this character subtly merges into open landscape to complete the sequence. Arrival in the village reverses this sequence (SO 7.6, 7.7).
- 5.4 The Parish Council and many of the objectors to the development consider that the proposed development would have no integrated relationship with the village. In effect, it would appear as an isolated ambiguous development of a suburban form, physically and visually detached from the village. It would not compliment the character and appearance of the village as it has developed and result in an unmistakably suburban encroachment into the rural landscape. The comments of the Council for the Protection for Rural England are also apposite. (Repeated at SO1 Para. 6.7). The Planning Report at para. 8.9 considers that:

*“Whilst the application site is visually considered as an open and highly picturesque parcel of undeveloped land it is located immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary **and will visually be seen against the backdrop of the built environment.**”*

The Parish Council would totally disagree with the latter part of this analysis. The evidence and supplementary material presented in SO1 (7.7), but primarily through on site observation, will reveal that the proposed development would appear, from the south on the village approach, as well as from southerly views within, as being intensely developed and visually isolated. The PC consider that the development would not be set against the backdrop of the built environment as suggested, but rather set against a backdrop of extensive tree cover and mature landscaping and open spaces with

incidental views of buildings from closer range, viewpoints. In combination, the relationship of these features creates an overall sylvan character for the southerly part of the village. This character description emphasises the potentially stark contrast between this part of the village and an intensely suburban and extensive development on a visually detached site to the south.

5.5 From the analysis presented in SO1, reference is made to the character and quality of Scorton with regards to its form, layout and building typologies. The SO also makes reference to the development as proposed as having a typical suburban character, not proposing anything that would appear as being distinctive to Scorton. (SO Para. 6.11). Reference is made on the SO to the NPPF and PPG in respect of achieving good design (Paras. 6.8 and 6.9). The NPPF also refers to the importance of good design and of particular note:

127. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

“c. are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)”

5.6 The Planning Report and the appellants in their submission, consider that the form of development is appropriate for this edge of village site in view of the number of design features. These include the set back of the development by approximately 35 metres, and consequent creation of a landscaped buffer containing trees and landscape to *minimise the visual harm* (as quoted in the report,) varied footprints of dwellings, gaps between and a development in keeping with the locality.

5.7 The Parish Council would not concur with this analysis. Whilst a ‘set back’ for the building frontage and a forward facing development is preferable to a larger scale development on the site it would, nonetheless, result in over dominating visually isolated enclave of development. The criticism of the layout for this *particular* location are set out in the SO para 6.16.

5.8 As a consequence, the development will be particularly detrimental to those characteristics that define the essential character, sense of place and setting of Scorton as described in this statement and the SO. Some critical factors that point to the unsuitability of this form of development in this location can be summarised as:

- The elongated form of development extending along Gubberford Lane will result in a visually inappropriate form of suburban development being disproportionate in scale, form and appearance with the village setting, sitting alongside a key approach route. The scheme design is not considered to be ‘distinctive’, based around the rural village vernacular of the local context. The ‘suburban’ character is apparent in view of the layout, road pattern with standard carriageway arrangement and design, density and spacing of development, the similarity of form and repetitive style of the dwelling types often with narrow frontages and their elevational detailing e.g. window proportions and standard detailing (e.g. UPVC). Despite the proposals to clad

front elevations of the dwellings in stone, to create the illusion of a vernacular derived design, side elevations faced in render along with standard roof pitched and long, deep plans would substantially weaken the effectiveness of this approach and its intended effects. . A number of dwellings face ‘side on’ to road frontages with blank or nearly blank elevations e.g. 5,8,22,23,29,30, 31. Plot 31 would ‘face’ and be prominent at the junction of Tithebarn/Gubberford lane. Plot 8 would present a blank elevation closing the view from the facing cul de sac and visible externally through the gap between plots 24 and 28. Building for life (Principle 7) recommends that in such situations dwellings should be dual fronted and avoid blank elevations to the street.

- The introduction of bungalows of a low profile with particular characteristics of form will add to the suburban character and have no visual relationship to locally distinctive styles.
- The density and form of development is inappropriate having regard to the form and character of the village and in particular its southerly elements and its relationship with open countryside
- The elevation of the development to a floor level some 8 metres above road level will add considerably to its conspicuous and intrusive nature, visually dominating views, obscuring views over the site and to the adjoining backdrop of the fells beyond. The arrangement of dwellings as shown on the ‘street scene’ drawing indicates that the dwellings sited across the frontage will be set at the same level, which is somewhat different to the undulating landscape at present. The planting of indigenous hedgerow will have no immediate or longer term screening or softening effects.
- Landscaping to the frontage will effectively become ‘domestic’ open space set against the backdrop of dwellings, rather than part of the agricultural setting of the village, which is an important aspect of the rural setting at present.
- The proposed virtue of the development having ‘gaps between’ when viewed from the frontage will expose the depth of the development adding to the increased perception of scale and density.
- The trees, the subject of preservation order have high amenity value particularly in view of their relationship to the landform and natural setting. If the development were to go ahead, this present attractive relationship would detrimentally change as the trees would be seen in the context of a suburban frontage, between highway and footway (Tithebarn Lane) and within built development devaluing their rural landscape amenity value.
- The frontage again, due to its elevated position, will lead to the greater exposure of walled enclosures with the potential consequences of views of the rear of domestic curtilages and potential extensions and other paraphernalia and parked cars on forecourts.
- The inappropriate urbanisation of the junction of the Gubberford Lane/Tithebarn Lane junction and the loss of significant lengths of hedgerow due to visibility spays and footway location. Frontage hedgerow is a very significant feature of the rural

character of the locality. The removal of the hedgerow and trees at the junction will result in the exposure of the development from views within the southerly part of the village especially as a result of the elevated ground levels of the dwellings.

- The visual impacts of construction over a considerable timescale on such prominent site on a key approach route to the village and visitor gateway to the Forest of Bowland.

The scheme would not fall within the definition of Para 127 of the NPPF in respect of achieving appropriate distinctive design of an appropriate form, layout and appearance

5.9 The PC response to the LVIA conclusions, supporting the application, are dealt with within the SO Para. 5.20

Noise Issues and Mitigation

5.10 The site is located very close to the Motorway and in the interests of promoting high standards of residential amenity, the proposed noise sensitive development should provide for an adequate acoustic environment. The initial response from the Councils Environmental Health Officer (EHO), stated:

*"I am concerned that the future occupiers of the proposed dwellings would be subject to a significant impact on their health and quality of life due to noise from the adjacent M6 motorway. I have reviewed the 'desktop' noise impact assessment by Acoustic Design Technology, dated 4th August 2016, which indicates that the noise standard of 50-55dB LAeq, 16hr (07.00 - 23.00) for external amenity areas could not be met **even with acoustic fencing/screening owing to the topography of the site. I would therefore recommend refusal of this application**".*

5.11 A further memo was forwarded from the Council's EHO and stated:

*"I have reviewed the updated noise assessment for this application by ADT, dated 16/03/17. Although the assessment does not provide any specific information on how to mitigate against noise from the M6 and railway, **other than the recommendation for a 4m (high) barrier along the boundary with the M6, and also does not consider the maximum instantaneous noise levels (LAMax)**, I have no objections to the development being granted permission, but this would only be on the basis that the undernoted noise conditions are made. The purpose of these conditions is to help ensure that there would be no adverse effect on the health and quality of life of the future occupiers of the proposed dwellings due to noise."*

A number of planning conditions were suggested. This would seem to suggest that 4 metre high barrier would not be adequate otherwise a condition suitably worded to the effect that the provision of a 4 metre high barrier should be provided prior to first occupation and thereafter be retained, would seem sufficient to satisfy noise mitigation issues.

5.12 The final memo of 28th March then stated:

“Further to the consultee response I made for this application on 1st February 2018, I wish to clarify that my response was based on the requirement to erect a 4m high barrier running the length of the eastern site boundary. This is because the predicted noise levels on which I based my response (noise map 2437/NM1 refers), take into account and are based on, the screening effect of this specification. For a lower height barrier, the noise data would need to be revised by the noise consultant for reassessment by the Environmental Protection team.”

5.13 The various memo’s seem somewhat contradictory. The Parish Council consider that the issue of noise attenuation is such a fundamental issue, that a specific scheme, that would satisfy the suggested conditions, should have been agreed (if it were possible and so the visual and other effects could be properly considered). If the proposed 4m high fence/bund-fence would satisfy the noise attenuation issue than this should be explicitly stated by the planning authority. There is no reference to the impact of the railway and the attendant attenuation.

5.14 In the Planning Report, in considering the potential visual impacts of the screening arrangement, at para. 8.16 it states:

“To mitigate against the impacts from noise from the M6 a 4m High barrier along the along the boundary with the M6 has been proposed within the mitigation measures set out within the ANA. Whilst this may mitigate noise impacts it could result in an unacceptable visual impact as it would be positioned on elevated land levels. As such full details of the Acoustic barrier should be explored. This could include landscape bunding with a lower level fence on top and new tree planting to screen the fencing. This would appear more natural feature within the landscape.

5.15 The Parish Council consider that the consideration of the visual appearance of the acoustic screen is a valid and important consideration. As described in this report and SO1, the landscape quality of the site is considerable and this would include views from the motorway. It is noted in the Statement of Case, that it is proposed to construct the barrier in the form of a bund with a fence located on top. The Planning Report suggests that this arrangement may well be satisfactory.

5.16 The Parish Council is of the opinion, that this form of screening would be highly intrusive and visually incongruous in this open landscaped setting. This feature would extend the full length of the site with an artificial bund having little connection with the soft undulating landscape. Such a bund would be very difficult to maintain and would likely become unkempt, and particularly so on the motorway side. This potential design would also give increased prominence to the acoustic fence, which itself would be incongruous and visually inappropriate in this setting, both initially and as it ‘weathers’. Its future maintenance would be determined by the residents of the development or its management company. There are some sporadically located trees adjoining the motorway which are generally poor specimens (not subject to a TPO), but close range views of a bund/fence would be visible and particularly so when the trees are out of leaf.

5.17 The need for such a means of such drastic means of acoustic screening (if it is acceptable in achieving the required effects) would be an incongruent feature in the landscape and its requirement further points to the unsuitability of the site for the type of development proposed.

5.18 The Parish Council submitted, as part of its objection, a detailed appraisal of its concerns about the localised issues in respect of local traffic and highway issues (SO2). This document provides a descriptive and analytical narrative in respect of highway conditions and traffic problems that are experienced in the locality. This is somewhat separate from desk top assessments of the likely effects of development and deals with the environmental effects of traffic to village character and amenity. The appointed inspector is respectfully requested to take these issues into account in assessing the impact of traffic generated by the development following its full occupation but importantly, during the construction period. The PC fully supports and endorses the views of the highway authority in its objection to the development.

Conclusion

5.19 In conclusion, the objections to the visual impact and inappropriateness of this form and scale of development on this site are as set out above and within the details critique of SO1. Ostensibly, the development would result in an unmistakably urban/suburban development, due to its form, layout and overall appearance. It would appear as being visually detached and disconnected from the village, poorly related to its character and form, bringing a disproportionate scale of housing development into an attractive area of landscape and broader rural environment. It is not clear that the noise attenuation issue has been satisfactorily resolved and if this is the case, then the means of achieving it would result in an unsatisfactorily visual intrusion. The highway safety concerns of Lancashire County Council are fully supported.

6. ISSUE 5. THE PREDICTED IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT ON DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETTS.

6.1 The analysis of the development and its impact on the designated conservation area is set out at Section 7 of SO1. It concludes that the proposed development would have a significant adverse and detrimental effect on the character and setting of the designated heritage assets; St Peters Church and the setting and character of the designated conservation area.

6.2 The protection of the historic environment and heritage protection as an essential element of sustainable development. The Parish Council do not believe that the development proposal is 'sustainable' in view of its detrimental effects on designated heritage assets. It believes the local planning authority has not given due weight to these matters in its conclusions. The issues and impacts are considered at length in SO1. In respect of the national policy context:

6.3 The NPPF states at paragraph 11, in respect of the presumption in favour of sustainable development:

“For decision-taking this means:

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed (6) ; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

*(6)The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 176) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; **designated heritage assets** (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 63); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.*

Despite the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the granting permission, footnote 6 specifically draws attention to the importance of protecting heritage assets. In its ‘saved policies’ and those contained within the emerging local plan there are particular policies with regard to heritage protection, the weight of which is to be given is them would depend on the stage the plan is at and their general compatibility with the NPPF.

In either scenario, the impact of the proposed development on heritage issues is a matter of great significance and the impacts are such that there is a strong case for refusing the development proposed.

6.4 The importance of considering the effect of development on heritage assets is highlighted further in para’s 193 and 194 of the NPPF.

*193. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, **great weight** should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.*

*194. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), **should require clear and convincing justification.***

This element of Policy points to the absolute necessity of fully considering a whole range of potential effects on heritage assets and their setting. Having considered this requirement fully in its analysis (SO1) and further within this statement, the Parish Council is of the opinion that the proposed development would not conserve the assets and in particular their important settings.

6.5 NPPF Policy 196 states:

196. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Taking all of the relevant policy matters into account the Parish Council, for the reasons set out in SO1 and within this statement, considers that whilst the proposed development may be considered to constitute ‘less than substantial harm’ the harm to these heritage assets are such that they are not outweighed by the suggested public benefits of the development.

6.6 The NPPF (Para. 184) further highlights the significant importance of protecting the range of heritage assets:

“These (heritage) assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations”

This aspect of heritage protection is a key aspect of sustainable development. The site, in contributing so significantly to the unique character and setting of Scorton and its Parish church, as an integral part of its overall character, has been ‘enjoyed’ by generations. This setting should be retained for its inherent value for an indefinite term.

6.7 Similarly, the NPPF (Para. 189) states:

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.”

The PC consider that the local planning authority has undervalued the important factors that this site plays in its contribution to ‘setting’ of the heritage assets.

6.8 In the appellants Statement of Case, the conclusion is drawn at Para. 5.3, in relation to Heritage Issues, that the development is supported by the Council’s Conservation Officer and in doing results there is no conflict with ‘saved policies’ or the NPPF. The report of the Council’s Conservation Officer (CO) in his report, concludes that the development, in preserving the sight line of the Church Tower and Spire from views along Gubberford Lane, preserves its setting. In the view of the Parish Council, the planning authority does not make an evaluation of the development on the broader and relevant issues of ‘setting’, other than preserving a view of the landmark. It says little in

respect of an evaluation about the connection of the listed church with the broader landscape/rural setting and little about the impact on the development, setting and character of the conservation area.

6.9 In Section 8.10 of the Planning Report report, whilst written in the context of the submitted LVA it states in the last sentence (quoting the landscape consultant):

“Whilst the development would not have any significant impacts upon the views from the AONB or from Wyre Way potential significant impacts may be experienced from the cemetery and grounds associated with St Peters Church and the bowling green to the north of the site.”

This in an issue is not dealt within the CO response to the application or the Heritage Statement submitted by the applicant, but was done so in SO 7.19 and is considered to be a matter of considerable importance.

6.10 In his report, the CO states that he concurs with the report of the applicant’s heritage consultant (HC) in full and also considers that the development would produce an eclectic mix of development. The Parish Council does not concur with this view, a matter dealt with at 5.8 of this statement and within SO1 (Para.7.12).

6.11 It is clear from the Planning Report (Paras 5.5 and 8.14) that in consideration of the potential impact of the development on the heritage assets, the conclusions are based directly on the views of the CO advice. This advice was provided on 28th April which was some time before the views of the Parish Council were submitted on the 8th June. The fully considered assessment of the heritage impact of the development was submitted as part of SO1, but no reference is made to the issues it raised in the body of the Report. It can only be presumed that little or no weight was attached to them. This is rather unfortunate. Nowhere in the comments of the CO or within the Planning Report does the issue, as to whether the setting of the village, conservation area and listed church would best be served by retaining the full open landscape character of the site, considered. The conclusion of the Parish Council is that the preservation of the open landscape setting would best serve conservation interests, rather than seek to minimise the harm by incorporating frontage landscaping and a setback, to preserve a view of the church tower.

6.12 The Parish Council in SO1 and in this statement identifies the important role that the site plays in defining the character and setting of the village and its heritage assets. It also identifies the importance of views ‘out’ from the village (SO 7.12), which is at variance with the analysis of the heritage consultant.

6.13 Policy CDMP5 of the Draft Wyre Local relates to the Historic Environment. Criteria 3 states:

“Development with the potential to affect any designated or non-designated heritage asset, either directly or indirectly including by reference to its setting, will be required to sustain or enhance the significance of the asset.”

The Parish Council believe that that the proposed development would neither sustain nor enhance the significance of the heritage assets.

6.14 Within the appellants Statement of Case, reference is made to the Scorton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, noting that it is silent on the issue as to the contribution the appeal site makes to the Conservation Area. It is noted that this document was adopted in 2007. Consultation on the document was concerned with issues and analysis of the designated area, fronted by and as advised by consultants, rather than including the broader issues of the setting of the conservation area. However, it is known that in 2007, pressures for development outside the village boundary were none existent in view of the development plan policies prevailing at the time and development limits were defined by a 'village envelope'. Thus, there were no development pressures around Scorton at that time.

6.15 The advice of Historic England (HE Advice Note.1) suggests that conservation area appraisals and management plans be regularly reviewed and updated, as is also required by Section 72 of the Listed Buildings Act. The importance of the settings of heritage assets within the NPPF, local planning policy and as advised by Historic England point to the importance of this issue *. A lack of explicit reference to 'conservation area setting' in the adopted Management plan should not diminish any consideration of its importance as a significant planning principle in the context of this development proposal or elsewhere. Should the management plan be revised, then the Parish Council would request that the fundamental issue of heritage setting be an integral part of the review since it is so fundamental (SO 5.7).

6.16 The advice of Historic England * (Version 1 at the time of preparing the report) was fully considered in assessing the impact of the proposed development, within SO1, which is essentially a 'staged process', suggesting a method of assessment of development proposals on the setting of heritage assets. In its comments on the application by the Parish Council, the character of the conservation area and the important aspects of setting were addressed in this way.

** Reference to Historic England Publication 'Good Practice Advice in Planning – Note 3. The Setting of heritage Assets (Second Edition 2017)*

6.17 The potential impact and inappropriateness of the development on this setting of the heritage assets are highlights in the SO and in previous sections of this statement.

Since the previous objection was presented to the Borough Council in respect of the application, subsequent amendments to the proposal and other factors, the Parish Council would wish to add further comment on specific issues.

Highway issues

6.18 The issue of immediate access to the site has been the subject of protracted discussion with the Highway Authority. The plan submitted with the appeal indicates a revised arrangement with the widening of Tithebarn lane to 4.8 metres and now a footpath linking the development with Gubberford Lane at the junction. Confirmation that this access arrangement is likely to be satisfactory from a highway engineering point of view, has particular consequences for this part of the conservation area. The wide radii and carriageway with footway, visibility splays, loss of hedgerow and isolation of the large preserved oak tree, between the carriageway and footway, set against a backdrop of elevated housing will, in combination, significantly and detrimentally change the rural lane character. Views of the elevated housing will be revealed from the southerly part of the conservation area. This unfortunate urbanising impact will be further compounded by the proposals to include street lighting (minimum 6 metre height) along Gubberford lane and Tithebarn Lane. These proposed works would neither preserve nor enhance this localised part of the conservation area.

Elevation of the Development

6.19 Within the report of the planning officer (Para 8.9), it is noted that a set back of the development from the road is some 35 metres. However, the adverse consequences of this is the confirmation that the floor levels of the frontage development would be 8 metres above road level in view of the slope of the site. The Parish Council considers that whilst the reasons for the set back is understood, the converse implication points to the resulting development being significantly elevated. This would result in the development being extremely prominent, dominant and highly conspicuous (a potential negative consequence of development as noted in the advice of historic England*). As a consequence, it is considered that this form of development would have the impact of diminishing the scale and importance of the listed church providing unwanted visual competition, distraction and intrusion diminishing the views, dominant scale and setting of the listed church and conservation area. This is particularly of concern given the importance of Gubberford lane as the key approach to the village with its variety of 'highly sensitive receptors'.

Diurnal Effects of the Development

6.20 A potential development effect of development that may require consideration*. In hours of darkness the locality and backdrop of the village with low levels of lighting, both public and domestic presents a particular ambience. This enhances the relative perception of an isolated setting of the village. The church tower and spire of St Peters church is illuminated.

A consequence of the proposed development would be one of an elongated suburban development. In combination the proposed street lighting along Gubberford Lane and Tithebarn Lane, the street lighting within the development along with domestic lighting

and illumination would fundamentally and detrimentally impact on the setting of the village setting, conservation area and church.

Sound Barrier

6.21 This issue has been discussed in section (Para 5.15 – 5.16) of this statement. The appellants Statement of Case confirms that a sound barrier will be provided in the form of a 2 metre mound surmounted by a 2 metre acoustic fence adjoining the M6 Motorway. Such views are relatively momentary but nonetheless, important to passengers along this highly trafficked highway. A consequence of the proposed sound barrier are twofold. Firstly, this form of barrier would appear highly incongruous and an alien feature in the rural landscape and as an additional consequence, would unacceptably screen off views over the open landscape which is part of the rural open landscape setting of the listed church and introduce a feature that of itself would be physically detrimental to the listed building in being close to it.

Conclusion

6.22 The Parish Council believe that the proposed development will have a significant, adverse impact on the character and setting of the conservation village of Scorton and be detrimental to the setting of listed St. Peters church as set out in the SO (section 7) and also in this statement. It does not believe that there is any national or local policy presumption that would ‘de facto’ justify the development. The PC further believes that the local planning authority has underplayed the heritage impacts of the development where *great weight* to the conservation of these assets should be applied.

7. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

7.1 These are set out in the Executive Summary.

APPENDIX 1

RESPONSE TO THE ORIGINAL CONSULTATION BY THE PARISH COUNCIL

CONSULTATION ON POTENTIAL HOUSING SCHEME : GUBBERFORD LANE/TITHEBARN LANE

Introduction

The Parish Council (PC) was consulted by Smith and Love Planning Consultants on 11th January, by letter and with an accompanying plan, on a proposal to introduce residential development on the site referred to as south of Scorton. The plan was discussed at the meeting and the following comments have been put together as form of initial response. The comments are offered below, which perhaps can be best described as ‘issues for consideration’ at this stage. On the basis that the

plan and letter was the only information supplied, and not the documents stated as being prepared to support the concept, these comments are rather general at this stage.

It was the view of the PC that given the likely public interest in a potential planning application, the PC should reserve its formal opinion following engagement with the community. It may be appropriate, should the developer decide to progress with an application, for the company to display the plans, with accompanying information for public inspection, perhaps in the form of an exhibition over several days in a convenient location, such as the village hall.

On the basis that the PC would not wish to present its formal response ahead of any potential planning application, thereby allowing it to gauge of public opinion in respect of the proposal to develop this particular site, nonetheless what it is able to do, at this point, is highlight some of the key issues. These reflect probable matters upon which the community will have regard to and are likely to comment upon.

Principle of development

One of the key issues that is likely to arouse major comment is in relationship to the principle of development and whether this is an appropriate site for housing development. Significant concern has been expressed by the community in respect of previous suggestions (most notably as a result of potential housing sites illustrated in the draft Wyre Local Plan Issues and Options stage) for development around the periphery of the village. The village has developed organically and incrementally through small scale consolidation and extension over a significant timespan, which is reflected in its present form and character. It is a small settlement. On this basis, the introduction of development on this green field site in a significant detached, standard suburban format, would probably be viewed as a major intrusion imposed onto and extending the village in an unacceptable manner. Relative to the size and scale of the present village, the proposed development would represent a significant increase in its physical scale and not natural evolving from it.

The site lies on the southerly approach to the village and presently forms an open landscape setting, particularly important on the approach along Gubberford Lane, with emerging views through the railway bridge before the site opens out. The foreground and middle distance visually interconnects with the Bowland Hills behind, thereby emphasising the rural setting of Scorton set at the foothills of the Forest of Bowland AONB. The development of the site in the manner proposed would result in the loss of this tract of important landscape and its wider connections. The open site forms an important transition between the villages soft built edge to the open landscape beyond.

This undulating open landscape tract, with trees and hedgerows, could be seen as an attractive part of the rural landscape and the inescapable fact is that the character of the site would change from an open landscape dominated element of the locality to a suburban form of built development, dominating the visual character of the immediate locality, even accounting for the proposals to set the development back from the road frontage. The site character contains trees and hedgerow that add positively to the rural landscape, whereas in the context of potential built development such features would become ancillary to the dominant residential development. The site is undulating and rises from Gubberford Lane which suggests that the development in being elevated would be particularly dominant from important viewpoints.

The site could be said to provide an important part of the open setting for the 'listed' St Peters Church. The church serves a rural parish and in common with many churches in this part of Lancashire, its character is derived from the fact that it stands in a relatively 'isolated' yet commanding open landscape setting on the edge of the village. The views of the church, located on the edge of the

village, in its elevated setting is particularly important from the southerly approach, emphasising its important rural setting. The impact of the potential development on this setting is a critical issue and whilst the letter states that views of the church will be maintained, there will be a material change to the relationship of the church to its surroundings. The views towards the church are critical but also from it, particularly in view of its elevated position with views into the surrounding landscape.

The open landscape of the site also forms a setting for the broader, designated conservation area. The settlement of Scorton has grown from its nucleated centre as a former mill village in the form of ribbons of development tapering out and has developed organically. This is particularly the case to the southerly side of the conservation area where the more intense built frontage of The Square merges into a 'looser' form of frontage development with landscape features becoming a dominant element prior to the transition into open landscape. Where the transition is complete the proposals would introduce an intense elongated and deep suburban form of development potentially appearing as being 'detached' from the nucleated part of the village. This will probably raise issues within the community as to whether this form of development is appropriate in this location and in relation to the conservation status of the village, its form and character. This issue would also relate to views outwards from the conservation area towards the open landscape as well as views towards the village from the outside.

In the letter to the PC it states that the "proposal is a modest development in keeping with the scale and character of Scorton." However, it is not explained as to how this conclusion has been reached. Nor is it clear why the development proposes 31 units. Perhaps this would need to be explained.

Traffic issues

It is understood that the County Council has concerns about the capacity of the wider network as well as the local road system around the village to cater for increased volumes of traffic. This will be a key issue for the County, Borough and Parish. The main access routes to the village are by way of Gubberford Lane and Station Lane, forming the links with the A6. There are particular issues with the junction with the A6 which creates congestion especially at peak times. As a result, traffic is often encouraged to use other routes, such as seeking to join the M6 at Forton Services or Hollins Lane, with the A6, which encourages the use of often inadequate single track country lanes with soft verges, within the Parish.

At a localised level, Scorton encounters chronic problems caused by parking within the village as a whole but in particular, around the Tithebarn Lane/Gubberford Lane junction. As a result there would be particular concern that the development of this site would self-evidently exacerbate this considerably as a result of the number of vehicles which would be generated by the new residents and general servicing requirements. Tithebarn Lane is currently used by walkers and other visitors and if this parking was lost, in view of access and visibility issues to the site, then there would be a significant increase in congestion in the village itself. The village is frequently 'log-jammed' throughout the year already.

Amenities

Capacity, in respect of the local school, will be a consideration. It is understood that the local primary school is at capacity.

Noise Intrusion

The site is obviously very close to the motorway and the planning authority and the PC would be keen to ensure that any development in the village – or parish – would provide for a good standard

of amenity for future occupants. It is difficult to contemplate how good amenity standards could be achieved with a development so close to the motorway.

Detail

Notwithstanding the issues in respect of the principle of the development, there are a number of questions that will probably be raised in respect of more detailed matters.

- Whilst it is accepted that this is a layout presented for initial comment, there does not seem any indication as to how this development is distinctive to its setting and how, for example, its form, layout and grouping has been based on an appreciation of the development and character of Scorton as a designated conservation area.
- The plan would seem to indicate that standard house types are proposed. It should be clear how the house designs have emerged or have adapted to complement the character and vernacular of the village as this may be defined.
- The bungalows at the southerly end of the scheme appear as a contrived addition with an orientation that would not provide for an appropriate outward facing elevation.
- The impact of the visibility spays and standard access arrangement from Tithebarn Lane could be said to create a suburbanisation of the character of the present lane.
- The falls across the site would impact on the visual character of the development. It is not clear how the layout is proposed to work with the grain of the site.
- The internal layout of the site creates some awkward relationships

As outlined, these are some initial comments based on the information supplied and raise some matters of principle and detail that are likely to be issues for consideration should an application be forthcoming.

It should also perhaps be pointed out that in connection with previous draft suggestions, put forward as part of the draft local plan, and in respect of housing development around the village, was significant local objection was raised. This included issues raised by the Parish Council but also the residents association, 'Save our Scorton'. The objections related to serious concerns about the potential impact of development that would have a detrimental impact on the character, scale, and setting of the village as well as a number of other broader and site specific issues. Save our Scorton Residents Association will no doubt wish to make specific comments in respect of the potential of developing this particular site for housing development.

In conclusion, the Parish Council can foresee some significant planning issues relating to the potential development of this site as outlined in this letter.