

# Comments for Planning Application 16/3211/OUT

## Application Summary

Application Number: 16/3211/OUT

Address: Thorpe Beck Farm Durham Road Thorpe Thewles TS21 3JN

Proposal: Outline application with some matters reserved for the erection of up to 24 Dwellings and upgrading of site access and public open space

Case Officer: Mr Simon Grundy

## Customer Details

Name: Ms Margaret Johnson

Address: 3 School Close, Thorpe Thewles, Stockton-on-Tees TS21 3JE

## Comment Details

Commenter Type: Parish

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

- Car parking issues
- development not suitable for area
- means of access
- over development of site
- scale/size of development
- set precedent
- Traffic or Highways

Comment: Having assessed the proposal against relevant legislation and guidance it appears that there is conflict between the need to sustain rural services versus the need to reduce the need to travel by car along with the need to reduce carbon emissions in a bid to prevent/slow down climate change.

The Parish Council note that due regard must be had to the fact that the local authority cannot currently demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites and thus the housing policies within the development plan which impact on the supply of housing are deemed, to be out of date. Where policies are out of date the local authority must approve applications unless in doing so the adverse impacts of such an approval would demonstrably and significantly outweigh the benefits.

Assessment in relation to sustaining rural services

We acknowledge the view set out in NPPG that housing can assist in supporting the broader sustainability of villages and that a thriving rural community depends, in part, on retaining local services and community facilities. We note that the application can assist in sustaining rural services in and around Thorpe Thewles, however given that such services are severely limited, there is very little to retain, the level of impact is deemed to be limited and not sufficient enough to

support the proposal.

#### Assessment with regard to NPPF transport paragraphs

Having considered the relevant NPPF transport paragraphs, namely 29 through 35 we appreciate that sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas (para 29)

We have given due regard to paragraph 29 and appreciate this application is located within the rural area and therefore consideration must be given to the statement that sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas. However, we strongly consider when taking the NPPF as a whole it significantly holds more weight than paragraph 29.

With regard to NPPF paragraphs 30, 34 and 35, given that bus service is limited, there is no tea time or evening service and no Sunday service, it is difficult to access employment especially if working beyond Stockton or Sedgefield and if working shift patterns. The limited service also makes it difficult to access leisure facilities which often take place on an evening or weekend. This limited service is not conducive to a working lifestyle or in many instances a none working lifestyle. Residents will not be able to rely upon the bus to access regular employment and therefore there is no real choice with regards to travel and the car is likely to be the only real option for commuters. For leisure and other purposes, again due to the limited tea time and Sunday service there is little likelihood that residents will choose the bus over the private car.

The cycle and walking network is not conducive of a commuting lifestyle. There are no safe and desirable walking links to the urban area where there is a large supermarket and a greater option for public transport. Cycle routes are not marked out, cyclist and pedestrians share roads with motorists; this is of greatest concern along the A177 towards Tesco where the road slims to one lane. Relying on cyclists to use this road appears to be an illogical assumption that there is a real alternative to the private car. An intensified use, without any improvements, would lead to a greater chance of conflict between cyclists/pedestrians and motorists, particularly at peak times, which is a time when commuters are likely to be going too/from work.

The applicant submits no solutions to improve the sustainable transport infrastructure and therefore makes no attempt to make the proposal more sustainable.

In paragraph 2.3.6 of the transport statement it appears that the maximisation of accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists has been delegated to the reserved matters application. We consider that the maximisation of such transport modes goes to the heart of the debate surrounding sustainable development and thus the matter should be addressed and mitigated against at outline stage.

With regard to NPPF paragraph 32 one significant impact of the proposal is the likely severe increase in carbon emissions associated with the high number of car journeys, this is because

Thorpe Thewles has a severe lack of employment opportunities, services and facilities and residents will undertake the majority of journeys via car and not by bus, foot or bike.

A second significant impact of the proposal is the likely increase in car accidents at the Durham Road/Wynyard Road junction. Notwithstanding any accident record at this junction it is inevitable that an increase of vehicular movements at this junction will exacerbate a problem that already exists. Villagers are frequently involved in either near head on collisions if in the car or near misses if on foot, this is due to the on street parking on the southbound side of Durham Road, including parking on both corners thus reducing sight lines and leading to only one side of the road being available for use. Options should be explored to make this junction safe otherwise its intensification increases the risk of road collisions.

A third significant impact of the proposal is the Wynyard Road/A177 junction, when leaving the village or when trying to access the village from Wynyard Road (the eastern side, across the A177 from Wolviston). Notwithstanding any accident record at this junction it is inevitable that an increase of vehicular movements at this junction will exacerbate a problem that already exists. Currently during peak times it can take some length of time to get out of the village as the A177 is heavily trafficked during peak hours. On many occasions after drivers have been waiting so long they choose to take the risk and pull out and on many occasions residents have witnessed a number of near misses or an accumulation of cars waiting in the middle section of the road. Options should be explored to make this junction safe otherwise its intensification increases the risk of road collisions.

In light of the impacts outlined above, it is considered that the cumulative impacts that the increase in carbon emissions, the impact upon the Durham Road/Wynyard Road junction, the Wynyard Road/A177 junction and the village as a whole are deemed to be severe and that one reason for refusal could be that of transport grounds.

We have had regard to the overall intent of NPPF chapter four, 'Promoting sustainable transport' and deem that the proposal is not within a location that has the possibility to maximise sustainable transport modes and reduce the reliance upon the private car.

Assessment relating to five year land supply and NPPF paragraph 14

The council state that they can not currently demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites and thus housing policies within the development plan which impact on the supply of housing are deemed, to be out of date. NPPF paragraph 14 states the local authority must approve applications unless in doing so the adverse impacts of such an approval would demonstrably and significantly outweigh the benefits.

Some of the adverse impacts of the scheme have been outlined above. Notably that given the lack

of sustainable transport options and the proximity from the main urban area it is likely that there would be a significant increase in the number of traffic movements in and around the village as residents would have no option but to travel by car. This increase in car movements would lead to an increase in carbon emission, not a reduction as is required by Government and would lead to an increased risk of accidents on the Durham Road/Wynyard Road junction and the Wynyard Road/A177 junction. The benefits of the scheme would be the provision of new homes.

Given the sites location in a village with severely limited services it is considered that there would be limited positive impact upon the rural businesses within the wider rural area. Given the lack of sustainable transport options and the proximity from the main urban area it is likely that there would be a significant increase in the number of traffic movements in and around the village as residents would have no option but to travel by car and thus the proposal would be in direct conflict within chapter four of the NPPF. It is appreciated the provision of 24 dwellings would contribute to the social and economic roles of sustainable development identified in the NPPF however this would not overcome the harm arising to the environmental role and the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits and therefore the proposal does not constitute sustainable development.

#### Other areas of concern - house type

The 2012 Tees Valley Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) shows that there is a need for bungalows across the borough. This application is not aligned with the evidence base or in accordance with NPPF paragraph 50. To rectify this matter, if the application is approved, some bungalows should be provided and some homes should be built to an adaptable homes standard.

#### Developer contributions

Notwithstanding the principle of development position identified above, in the interests of providing sustainable development and in ensuring that the proposal is acceptable in planning terms the Parish Council would like to see the developers consult with the village residents as to the planning obligations. As a starter areas may include - Public transport subsidy, Green infrastructure, Play facility - disability access.

#### Village hall

The applicant relies on the level of service provision within the village to assert that the village is sustainable. One facility mentioned is the village hall. The village hall is managed by volunteers; an increase in village population could lead to an increased use of the hall. If the volunteers decided to stop managing the facility then the facility would close. Without securing funding for a paid employee this facility can not be relied upon as a sustainable village facility.

#### Affordable housing

The application should be conditioned to ensure that the tenure and size of the homes are built in accordance with the most up to date evidence once and every effort should be made to ensure

that those with a connection to the village and then the rural area are given priority.

#### Biodiversity

To ensure compliance with NPPF paragraph 109 ("providing net gains in biodiversity where possible") I would request that provision is made to improve the wildlife and ecology in the area, features such as bat bricks and raised ridge tiles should be incorporated to allow bats to roost in the dwellings and bird boxes should be provided throughout the site. To ensure the ecological enhancements come to fruition I would expect the requirement of such features forms part of any conditional approval.

#### Energy efficiency and on site energy provision

To assist in mitigating against the anticipated high level of carbon emissions associated with the development I expect that a high percentage of the proposals energy is derived from on a renewable source and that electric charging points are provided.

The obligations are fully justified and evidenced and that they would not prevent development going forward. If the applicant disputes this then common practice is to submit a viability assessment.

The contributions listed above are required to mitigate the impact of the development rather than a being a benefit of the scheme and as such have a neutral effect on the planning balance and should not be viewed as a benefit when considering NPPF paragraph 14.

Notwithstanding the applicant's contention that the council can not demonstrate a five year housing supply, We consider that the council could rely upon NPPF footnote 9 and NPPF paragraph 216 to give some weight to the emerging plan and therefore argue that the council does have a five year supply. In doing so policy EN13 would be reinstated and the emerging housing policies, which are considered to be consistent with the NPPF would hold weight. All of which would seek to refuse development beyond the village envelope in Thorpe Thewles.