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9th April 2018

Planning & Development,
For the attention of Helen Goulden,
Harrogate Borough Council,
P.O. Box 787,
Harrogate.

Dear Madam,

Planning Application 18/00912/OUTMAJ
Almsford Bank Stables, Harrogate

Thank you for your consultation on the above proposal for up to 65 dwellings.

We object most strongly to this application for a housing estate in the Crimple Valley, despite that 26 affordable homes are proposed.

THE LOCAL PLAN

The Local Plan (Publication Draft 2018) is proposing to desecrate the Crimple Valley just south of the above site with the employment land allocation PN18 under Policy DM2. Opposite to PN18 on the west side of the A61 Leeds Road, a large site, PN19, is allocated for housing under Policy DM1 with a potential yield of 277 dwellings. Also in the Crimple Valley the allocation of PN17 at Spring Lane Pannal for 77 dwellings under Policy DM1 is set to damage even more valued landscape in the Crimple Valley.

During the Local Plan process that produced the Harrogate District Local Plan 1991-2006 (published in 2001) the Council vigorously defended the Crimple Valley from development. No housing or employment allocations in the vicinity of the current PN17, PN18 or PN19 were included.

The Almsford Bank site is included as a Special Landscape Area (SLA) under saved policy C9d, (the Crimple Valley). Despite the allocations in the current Draft Local Plan of sites PN17, PN18 and PN19, the area is retained as SLA under Policy NE4: Landscape Character.

This policy states:

The Special Landscape Areas are valued locally for their high quality landscape and their importance to the settings of Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon. The designation reinforces the importance of these landscapes and their high sensitivity to inappropriate development which would adversely impact on the quality of the area designated. Development proposals within these areas are required to meet the following criteria:

F. *Avoid significant loss of key characteristics that contribute to the quality of the Special Landscape Area and the setting of Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon.*

G. *Ensure that development proposals are linked to existing settlements and are designed to integrate the urban edge with the countryside and where appropriate enhance the appearance of the urban fringe.*

Unfortunately the Policy has a rather hollow ring considering the above mentioned sites and other large areas of SLA that have been allocated for development.

THE ALMSFORD BANK STABLES SITE

If the protection of the Crimple Valley and SLA have any meaning at all, development of this site is unacceptable. Building dwellings here would ensure almost continuous development from the Green Belt boundary at the railway line through the tyre garage, the petrol station, the Mercedes Benz car showrooms and allocated site PN18 to the built up edge of Harrogate at Fulwith Road/ Fulwith Grange/ Fulwith Drive.

The development limit for Harrogate in the Draft Local Plan has not changed from that in the 1991-2006 Local Plan in the area of the application site. The application is entirely outside of the development limit for Harrogate. It also comes very close to the proposed (and much extended) development limit for Pannal, thus ensuring coalescence of Harrogate and Pannal, except for an insignificant few metres. The site is not allocated for development of any type in the old Local Plan or the new Draft Plan.

The site is within the setting of the Grade II* listed Railway Viaduct. Many trees are proposed for removal.

TRAFFIC

The A61 Leeds Road at the proposed access point for the 65 houses is unsuitable for such traffic movements as would be generated. We

acknowledge that it is an existing access point and that improvements could/would be made but that in itself would have an urbanising effect. The number of vehicle movements in and out is currently very few. It is not a suitable location for the dramatic increase that would ensue, due to the speed and volume of traffic coming out of Harrogate on this bend. Vehicles turning left out of the site would create a hazard. Those turning right out of the site would also create a hazard and impede traffic coming up the steep Almsford Bank into Harrogate. Congestion is frequently to be encountered travelling up the bank with queueing at least all the way to the junction at Leadhall Lane/Hookstone Road. Almsford Bank is notably hazardous when snow or ice is present – more traffic can only increase the difficulties.

CONCLUSIONS

The application should be refused due to a negative effect on the landscape. It is an incursion beyond development limits and into the Crimple Valley SLA and within the setting of the listed Railway Viaduct. Coalescence of Harrogate and Pannal would occur under the proposed development limit changes for Pannal. Loss of a large number of trees is unacceptable. The setting of Harrogate should not be compromised but respected as required by Draft Local Plan Policy NE4. It would be dangerous to introduce the many vehicle movements in and out of the site due to an estate of 65 dwellings.

Thank you again for your attention.

Yours faithfully,

Henry Pankhurst
Chairman
Harrogate Civic Society