

Kirkbymoorside Town Council

Planning Proposal Reference 12/00599/MOUT (Gladman Developments): Westfields, Kirkbymoorside

Submission to Ryedale District Council – The Planning Authority

1 Introduction

Kirkbymoorside Town Council notes the application by Gladman Developments Ltd for permission to develop land at Westfield, Kirkbymoorside as follows:

'Up to 210 no. (Use Class C3) residential dwellings, 50 no. (Use Class C2) apartments with care for older people, the provision of expansion land to Kirkbymoorside Community Primary School (Use Class D1), landscape, open space, highway improvement works and associated works (site area 11.6ha).'

The Town Council has taken note of many submissions made by residents of the town and has discussed the application in the light of national and local planning policy and, in particular, 'The Ryedale Plan – Local Plan Strategy' upon which Ryedale's planning policy is to be based over the next 15 years. As a consequence, it wishes to record its serious concerns in relation to the proposed development as set out below.

2 Background

The Council notes from 'The Ryedale Plan' that policy will be directed at sustainable development and will help to support the delivery of new homes, jobs and shops to address the needs of local communities and it will look to ensure that these are carefully co-ordinated with the services and facilities that communities rely on and which are essential to wellbeing and quality of life. The Ryedale Plan will also protect those things that are important in this area and which are highly valued by local people.

In this regard, Kirkbymoorside would highlight the need for the Planning Authority to take full account of the views being expressed by local people concerned with their own needs and those of the community they live in.

The introduction to The Ryedale Plan also states that while reflecting National Planning Policy, 'it establishes a local policy approach which reflects local issues, needs and requirements. This strategy aligns with national priorities...while at the same time addressing the aspirations and opportunities that have arisen throughout a lengthy consultation process with local people..' Thus the need to take account of local views and concerns is a clear policy aim.

The Ryedale Plan also points to an increasing population and increased housing need in the area in the coming 15 years due to:

- Inward migration of working couples, families
- Retiring households and an increasing elderly population
- Decline in the size of households
- Separations

In this regard, the Town Council urges the Planning Authority to place the needs of the local population and community at the forefront of its decision-making, rejecting any approval which might favour inward migration with all related consequences.

3 Effect on the Character of Kirkbymoorside & Surrounding Area

While Kirkbymoorside Town Council has a number of specific concerns about the proposed development by Gladman, it has a fundamental concern about the effect of such a large site on the character of the town. The addition of 210 new dwellings plus 50 apartments and their occupants on a single site will result in a large increase in the size of the town which will impact significantly on its character. The Ryedale Plan defines a 'large' development as 150 houses and the Gladman proposal being significantly larger than this must be contrary to the policy set out in section 4 (SP2) which states that the pattern and distribution of site allocations for Kirkbymoorside will constitute 'Small-medium sized sites...' The NPPF stipulates that where there is a clear statement of policy, this should be upheld.

The Ryedale Plan is clear that development should not erode special local qualities (para 2.22): 'The District's high quality environment is integral to its character and appearance of the area and decisions over the location and amount of new development and land management need to be balanced with the need to protect and enhance the area's landscapes, townscapes and natural assets and not to undermine or erode these special qualities'.

The Town Council believes that approval for such a large development would be at variance with this policy.

Furthermore The Ryedale Plan's Vision for the future of Market Towns states that they will be 'vibrant service centres and centres of social activity for local residents and visitors. They will act as a network of accessible and sustainable centres serving their wide rural hinterlands. The focus of new homes, jobs and shops: they will have each retained their individual and unique identities.... Kirkbymoorside will remain the relatively small and busy local market town that it is today, focussed on providing for the everyday needs of local people...'

Reference has already been made to the local population increasing due to inward migration. The definition of 'local people' therefore needs to be carefully weighed in relation to this application. In this regard, the primary focus must be on existing residents and not those attracted into the area to live (while working elsewhere) by the creation of a large residential development.

4 Employment

There has been considerable discussion about the need for new development on the scale of the Gladman proposal in the light of:

- a) The current employment situation in the Ryedale and, specifically, Kirkbymoorside area and
- b) The present macro-economic situation which continues with an uncertain outlook.

While the policy aims within 'The Ryedale Plan' are to be commended in terms of objectives to expand employment opportunities and create work for younger people, there is doubt as to whether, in present or any future circumstances, the growth in employment opportunities in the immediate area can keep pace with housing provision on the scale suggested. In this context, the Town Council notes that 37 ha of additional employment land is allocated to

meet need in the district, 5% of which is for the Kirkbymoorside and Helmsley area. This allocation appears to be out of proportion with the allocation of 10% of housing requirement in the coming 15 years (300 houses) to Kirkbymoorside.

Inward migration will be the result of oversupply of housing in relation employment opportunities by people wishing to continue to work in Leeds, York and Scarborough but who choose to live in attractive surroundings (para 2.24 Ryedale Plan: 'The area is accessible to centres of employment in York, Leeds and Scarborough and proves an attractive location for those who wish to commute to work elsewhere'). To encourage commuting to a significant extent by approving a development of this type would only lead to additional traffic, congestion and pollution especially as public transport links from the town are recognised to be poor at present (para 2.34):

'Ryedale is characterised by low levels of public transport provision....Ryedale is one of the least accessible areas of the sub-region in terms of ability of residents to access employment and services by public transport'

5 Housing Supply Estimates

The Gladman proposal provides for up to 210 residential dwellings and 50 apartments with care for older people.

The Ryedale Plan establishes a level of house building of an annual average completion rate of 200 units in order to deliver at least 3,000 new homes in the period 2012-2027. Within this figure it sets an objective for Kirkbymoorside of 300 houses in the 15-year period on sites which are:

- Within current development limits and
- Small-medium sized sites predominantly to the north of the A170 and to the east and west of the town avoiding coalescence with Keldholme.

The Gladman proposal would supply the 210 dwellings and 50 apartments over some 6-8 years, fulfilling 86% of the Kirkbymoorside target on a single site. This objective must be questioned especially in the light of the Ryedale Plan's statement that developments in Kirkbymoorside are to be on 'Small-medium sized sites' and 'Within current development limits'. In this regard it is appropriate, again, to consider the size of the development in relation to the size of the town overall: whereas a site of 260 homes over a period of 6 years may be considered small in relation to the size of Scarborough or York, it is exceptionally large in relation to Kirkbymoorside. As previously stated, the size of this proposed development is outside the scope of the policy set out in the Ryedale Plan which defines a 'large' development as 150 houses. Approval of the application would therefore appear to be at variance, once again, with policy.

The figure of 300 houses for Kirkbymoorside included within the Housing Supply Estimates does not take into account the provision of so-called 'windfall' sites which add to capacity and the potential to further increase the extent of development in the town. The Ryedale Plan points out (para 4.11) that in 2002-11, 82% of the 1442 homes built in Ryedale originated from unanticipated 'windfall' sources. In recent years, the Town Council estimates that close to 100 houses have been built in Kirkbymoorside alone on windfall sites in addition to those identified by planners. On the assumption that this trend will be maintained, the total number of houses that could be built in Kirkbymoorside in addition to the Gladman development, if approved, could be substantial leading to even greater enlargement of the town and consequent problems.

6 Greenfield and Brownfield Sites

Evidence suggests that there is a substantial availability of brownfield sites in the Kirkbymoorside area which could and will be developed in the coming years. Figures obtained from Ryedale District Council show that, excluding Russell's Yard for which development permission has now been granted, there are estimated to be brownfield sites in Kirkbymoorside with sufficient capacity for around 200 houses. This represents two thirds of the requirement for the next 15 years! To these would certainly be added further 'windfall' sites. We conclude from this that there is likely to be a sufficient supply of development land without considering the use of farmland.

The Ryedale Plan recognises that while the number of brownfield sites is necessarily limited, preference is to be given to the development of such sites (para 3.7):

'The redevelopment of Brownfield sites will generally enhance their [the 5 Towns] appearance, reduce the need to use greenfield land and provides an opportunity to clear contamination'.

In this context, applications to redevelop Brownfield sites in the town should receive priority over the development of high quality farmland on the edge of town in accordance with the recommendations of national and local plans.

While considering the question of developing high quality farmland, the Town Council requests an assurance from the Planning Authority that robust surveys have been carried out to determine the extent to which wildlife could be damaged if the Gladman development proceeded.

Finally, we note that a public right of way crosses the farmland which is the site of the proposed development. The NPPF states that developments should protect **and enhance** public rights of way. While we note that the footpath is protected, we question whether it could be enhanced by the construction of 260 dwellings.

7 Infrastructure

The Town Council has been greatly concerned in its discussions about the proposed Gladman development on the effect of such a significant number of houses on the town's infrastructure. While it notes that contributions from developers to infrastructure and services via Section 106 Agreements seek to overcome such concerns, there is nevertheless concern in relation to flooding as well as provision of education and medical services in particular.

In recent months considerable work has been carried out by Yorkshire Water to attenuate the surface water drainage systems in certain areas to ensure alleviation of future flood risks. The proposed Gladman development would create a huge area of tarmac and concrete which would concentrate rainwater drainage into a relatively small soakaway area which could easily increase flooding risk in new areas of the town and surroundings.

The Ryedale Plan recognises difficulties being imposed on us by climate change and especially flooding:

'A changing climate causes changes to weather patterns and there is forecast to be greater extremes of weather: from heavy rain which causes river and flash flooding.'

Given the known problems of flooding in the area it seems unwise to proceed with such a large single development which can only exacerbate a flooding risk which is already

recognised to be significant. It is recognised that creation of large developments may not always lead to flooding problems in the immediate vicinity of the development itself; the risk may be displaced to other areas where flood waters accumulate. Given the size of this proposal, such risk must be significant and we question whether existing drainage and pumping arrangements will be able to manage the larger concentrated amounts of rainfall now being seen and projected for the future.

The Town Council is also concerned that the influx of perhaps 200 new families into the town would also create significant pressure on education and medical provision in the town. It requests the Planning Authority to consider and advise the Council on how such pressure would be met such that the educational needs of young people and medical needs of all would not be compromised. In relation to the school, adequate room for future expansion must be retained on the present site which currently affords children a pleasant and open environment. Moreover, it is important that all levels of educational provision are maintained on the same site from nursery and pre-school, children's centre and through to the end of primary. It does not appear sensible to box the existing school in to the extent where future provision might have to be considered in terms of split sites or completely new construction when adequate space now exists. It is also important to note that the Government supports the need for schools to have sufficient space and playing field area to underpin the opportunity for children to develop sporting excellence in the coming years. Such opportunity must never be denied children in Kirkbymoorside.

Finally, we point out that the Gladman proposal appears to amount to a speculative application being lodged in advance of the adoption of both the Community infrastructure Levy and finalisation of the Ryedale Sites Document. At the very least, therefore, consideration of such a significant planning application should be rejected or deferred pending adoption of these documents.

8 Affordable Housing

In principle, Kirkbymoorside Town Council welcomes provision of affordable housing where this:

- a) Genuinely services the needs of local people. It is vital that the number of affordable dwellings to be provided meets current and anticipated need among local families and young people. It is unacceptable that local people in need are obliged to reside elsewhere due to inadequate supply; equally it is unacceptable that people from other areas should be housed where supply exists: this can only lead to disquiet among those involved and unnecessary pressure on facilities in the area they are housed.
- b) Reduces homelessness
- c) Supports economic activity through the provision of housing to local workers otherwise unable to afford to stay in the area. Supporting people's wish to work and remain in the area and avoid 'brain drain' is an essential objective of affordable housing, linked to providing opportunities for work and for accessing transport within the local area as well as other services.

The Council notes the SP3 policy statements in the Ryedale Plan which stipulate that provision of 35% of new dwellings should be of the affordable type. It also notes the Plan's proposal that at least 160 Extra-care bed spaces through a total of four, forty-unit schemes will be required to 2020, one of which in Kirkbymoorside.

Information obtained from Ryedale District Council shows a current need in the Kirkbymoorside Ward for 10 affordable houses and a further 6 per annum over the next 5 years, making a total of 40. On the assumption that the figure of 210 dwellings is used to calculate the requirement for affordable units at the 35% level, 73 units would be created.

This represents an oversupply of 33. Spare capacity would undoubtedly fulfil part of Ryedale's overall need but would necessarily exacerbate inward migration into Kirkbymoorside with consequent pressure on facilities and services.

In setting any conditions on future affordable housing to be built in the Kirkbymoorside area, the Town Council seeks assurances from Ryedale District Council that:

- a) Supply will be balanced with local demand
- b) Restrictions would be placed on those who could reside in affordable housing, favouring those from the local area and
- c) Kirkbymoorside Town Council would be consulted on the type of affordable housing to be provided in order to ensure a proper balance be achieved between rented housing schemes and/or shared equity schemes.

9 Traffic & Safety

The Town Council is concerned that the proposed development would lead to an unacceptable increase in the level of traffic in the Kirkbymoorside area:

- a) Between the new estate and the town given the relative distance between the two (especially also in the light of the recent decision to grant Tesco permission to build and open in the town)
- b) Between the new houses and the school (despite the proximity) and consequent parking and congestion problems around the school
- c) Between the estate and secondary schools in the area and
- d) To and from the town to the new residents' places of work which, as pointed out above, would often be distant from Kirkbymoorside.

There would be consequent effects on parking in the town which is already congested, in addition to health & safety issues at junctions (onto the A170 and at the school).

The Ryedale Plan recognises this growing problem:

2.7 Ryedale.. has one of the highest rates of road accident injuries and deaths in the country and

2.36 There are [also] notable congestion problems in some of the Market Towns that arise from a combination of increased traffic, a constrained historic fabric, seasonal and 'through' traffic. This results in environmental problems and impacts on quality of life, health & safety. Congestion also detracts from the appearance and experience of the Market Towns.

The proposed Gladman scheme has failed to take account of traffic and vehicle movement issues in Kirkbymoorside adequately and does not address consequential issues such as:

- The inadequacy of streets within the town (notably West End and Tinley Garth)
- Inadequacy of footpaths to and from the town and the need for separate and safe provision for cycles and mobility scooters

We are also unable to understand how the Gladman application can be considered in the absence of a decision on the junction with the A170 as this is such a key element of the proposal. Failure to resolve this in advance of consideration could lead to serious consequences for the town from congestion and for through traffic as well as safety in the coming years.

Traffic and road safety issues are of concern in Kirkbymoorside already. A large development of the size proposed would add to these problems to the extent they could become unmanageable. Environmental problems would be increased, congestion would be multiplied and the health and safety of residents and visitors to the town compromised.

10 Public Transport

The relative lack of public transport provision to and from Kirkbymoorside has been of concern for a long time. Communications with Malton (and therefore the railway to York, Leeds and Scarborough) are indirect and difficult while the bus service along the A170 is slow and infrequent.

Having examined all the bus routes serving Kirkbymoorside, it is clear that:

- They do not meet the requirements of people who work in Scarborough or even Pickering, it being impossible to travel by bus in the mornings in time to start work at or before 9am
- Direct bus communications with York similarly do not allow people to travel to and from work
- The twice weekly service to Malton is likely to support only the infrequent needs of shoppers and
- The Moors bus service serves destinations in the North York Moors only on Sundays and Bank Holidays in summer and will be withdrawn in October 2012. Consequently this service does not merit consideration at all in the context of this planning application.

Public transport to and from Kirkbymoorside is inadequate to meet current need. Significant expansion would be required even partially to offset the demand created by a very large new housing development which includes a high proportion of affordable and sheltered accommodation. Our conclusion is that granting of planning consent would lead to greater congestion due to an increase in car traffic; isolation for certain parts of the community unable to access adequate transport services; increased pollution from car traffic; and a reduction in road safety and increase in accidents.

11 Conclusion

Having listened carefully to the views of residents in Kirkbymoorside and considered the above aspects of planning application reference 12/00599/MOUT carefully, Kirkbymoorside Town Council is unable to support the application.

The Town Council's concerns fall into a number of important policy areas as set out above. We consider that the application is seriously at variance with a number of statements of policy in the Ryedale Plan. Furthermore, Ryedale District Council have confirmed that there is currently a 5-year supply of development land available such that this development is not required at present. Work on sites selection should be completed before this application is considered.

Council members believe that before any consideration at all is given to this application by the Planning Authority, a site visit must be arranged in conjunction with Town Councillors. In doing so, the Town Council believes the reasons for its opposition will become clear.