



22 November 2020

[Redacted]

Chief Planning and Housing Officer  
Council Headquarters  
Newton St Boswells  
Melrose  
TD6 0SA

Dear Mr Aikman

**Scottish Borders Local Development Plan, Proposed Plan – Hawick**

**BHAWI004**

**BHAWI001**

**AHAWI027**

**BHAWI002**

I am writing [Redacted] of the above parcels of land identified in your local plan, some 50 acres or thereabouts. Our family have been farming this land since 1795, indeed my daughter is a seventh-generation farmer at Courthill, which is quite unique in the Scottish Borders. We have been tenants of Burnhead Estate since 1795, we still rent the land from the same family whom I understand have owned the land since 1474. After many decades our Landlord has come back to live in [Redacted] which incorporates [Redacted], a B listed Tower.

I also attach my response from the last consultation which still holds. Indeed, BHAWI004 was originally outlined for housing, it is now proposed as industrial, which is fully worse. Industry brings with its traffic, noise, disruption and pollution and an impact on the people living in the surrounding houses and at Burnhead. It certainly contravenes all planning policy surrounding historic land marks, and in this case the 'B' listed Tower at Burnhead. I am disappointed no attention has been paid to my previous response.

I am writing to object to the proposed plans from many angles

1. **Economically**

I note the development noted 'no economic consequences'. This is certainly not the case, we as a business will have major economic losses. This is indeed nearly 20% of our cropped land, we need the same equipment for 100 ha as we do 120 ha. These ha are the where our economies of scale make a difference. It is prime arable land and more productive than any other land about Hawick.

I am passionate about letting the younger generation take control of the business, however hurdles such as these threats of planning are not to be taken lightly. Scottish Government are very concerned about the aging farming populations, indeed over the past decade we have invested heavily at Courthill to ensure the farm remains viable. Our limiting resource is land and losing the above parcels of land would be catastrophic to our farming business and means the infrastructure we have built over the last ten years would be oversized, and our investment wasted. Farming on the urban fringe means we have enough issues on our boundaries, please don't encroach any further. This is prime arable land with which our business depends on.

Under the current SRDP there is support for new and young entrants to farming through the [Rural Priorities package on New Entrants and Young Entrants](#). This support aims to encourage more new entrants and young farmers to set up and develop profitable, sustainable farming businesses. It encourages them to

**develop new business opportunities and to make sure that their businesses are modern and make efficient use of the resources available to them.**

Taking this land would deny a young couple the chance to develop a profitable, sustainable farm business

Many local families and businesses, cottage tenants, accountants, lawyers, dykers, fencers, machinery dealers, animal feed specialists, the vets, agrochemicals, joiners, plumbers, roofers, and not least our farm staff, agricultural contractors and self-employed casual labour all rely on the viability of our farming business.

## **2. Visual impact from A7 approach to Hawick on the North side from Selkirk**

I am confused by what we are trying to achieve. I am constantly hearing that Hawick needs to attract more tourists. Indeed I am aware of two groups of business men and woman looking to find ways of attracting tourists. One led by Gordon Muir, born and bred in Hawick, son of Bob Muir a past common riding acting father, and well-respected Vet. The other made up of accountants, and other local businesses.

To tourists the approach to Hawick down the A7 is stunning, with prime well farmed arable land in the foreground to Ruberslaw.

Please can someone explain why we want a massive industrial development on the Northern approach at BHAWI001 and 004.

Planting a few trees on the Northern boundary of BHAWI001 is never going to hide an industrial development.

I thought we were meant to be protecting listed buildings, this industrial development certainly does not fit with local Policy EP7

Further there are two major roads, and within them is one block of well farmed arable land BHAWI004 with conservation strips around them allowing for the enjoyment of all the residents of Burnfoot.

SBC own plenty of land around Home Bargains and to the west at AHAWI013, MHAWI001 BHAWI003 which would be better utilised for industry.

Indeed, I am very aware of the anguish and upset you have caused to the people of Burnfoot who live in housing surrounding BHAWI004. I have received several comments from distraught residents living on the edges of these fields we farm and I get the feeling most of them are unaware of how to respond to your consultation. As a farmer on the Urban fringe, we constantly strive to provide for those wishing to enjoy their surroundings and hope to provide for Burnfoot's 'social well-being'.

**Note :-Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) 137. States:**

**The planning system should: promote the care and protection of the designated and non-designated historic environment (including individual assets, related settings and the wider cultural landscape) and its contribution to sense of place, cultural identity, social well-being, economic growth, civic participation and lifelong learning.**

Further as has been mentioned in one reply I read, why would anyone want to live at AWAWI027 beside an industrial development and all the noise, traffic, disruption and pollution that goes with such areas. Further there are 2 very fast roads surrounding this site, with the industrial site, BHAWI001 it makes for an exceedingly unsafe 'island' to live on.

Our Farming policy is to protect the environment and provide access to those who surround it. It constantly irks me that all dykes we own are intact, unlike the dykes owned by SBC at the Galalaw roundabout which have been falling into disrepair for years and a constant eyesore, especially when this is the first impression tourists get on their approach to Hawick on the A7. Yet SBC wishes to be responsible for yet more of the approach to Hawick.

## **3. Logistics**

I am not sure what the plans are for the drainage water but there are already issues from the past developments when the A7 was made. The wetland is a consequence of this.

Maintaining the conservation and herb rich areas around the Mill Pond and Burnhead Farmhouse and Tower are fragile, and I do not think this has been considered in this plan. Any drainage water would end up in the 'Glen' and the infrastructure would be within very close proximity ( under 20m) to Burnhead listed tower and I have concerns that this may impact the fragility of the tower.

#### 4. History

Hawick has an immense history. History is what makes Hawick, and all the commandry. We have a slice of both at Burnhead, The Scotts came here in 1474, my great great great Grandfather rented land since 1795 from the Scott's, we still have an enviable Landlord tenant relationship. The history, maps, archives of the land mentioned above goes back centuries, much of which is still held in both our houses. Both families are still living in the original farmhouses, one being Burnhead Tower. If Hawick loses this history it would be a tragedy. Indeed, we plan to develop this history, but this is only possible if you leave the land for us to farm.

**Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS) states that "decisions affecting any part of the historic environment should be informed by an inclusive understanding of its breadth and cultural significance." It goes on to note that "decisions affecting the historic environment should ensure that its understanding and enjoyment as well as its benefits are secured for present and future generations."**

I do not believe there is any understanding of this cultural significance within this plan.

I note a local initiative

<https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20004/business/562/regeneration/4>

With many of the farm buildings at Burnhead being of this era I suggest they are also very much part of our heritage, albeit not in the town centre

And to conclude I note the national policy on

**Prime Agricultural Land:**

**SPP 80. ... Development on prime agricultural land, or land of lesser quality that is locally important should not be permitted except where it is essential:**

- **As a component of the settlement strategy or necessary to meet an established need, for example for essential infrastructure, where no other suitable site is available; or**
- **For small-scale development directly linked to a rural business; or**
- **For the generation of energy from a renewable source or the extraction of minerals where this accords with other policy objectives and there is secure provision for restoration to return the land to its former status.**

We would welcome a visit from the planning department to illustrate why these parcels of land mentioned above should be removed from these plans once and for all, enabling our families to continue make a viable living from farming, and ensuring history lives on.

Yours sincerely

Jane Mitchell (nee Usher)