



## **PROPOSED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2020 OBJECTION TO HOUSING ALLOCATION AGALA029**

I would like this allocation to be removed from the local plan for the following reasons -

### **Effect on Abbotsford and its designed landscape**

This site and a proposed housing development on it have now been rejected at four separate public enquiries, mainly due to the effect development would have on Abbotsford House and its designed landscape.

Abbotsford House was the first example of the Scots Baronial architectural style and it is therefore imperative that not only the actual building, but its wider setting is protected from any further development that could conceivably destroy that unique setting.

The Borders Designed Landscapes Survey (Peter McGowan Associates) states that

*“The gardens, policy woodlands and riverside park close to the house of very high quality and the whole landscape is iconic and of outstanding national significance.”*

Since the last of the public enquiries in 2015 major effort and investment has been made to return Abbotsford House to the major tourist attraction it once was. The opening of the visitor centre and the recent improvement of the path network is attracting increasing numbers of visitors, not just to the house but to the surrounding designed landscape. The views from within this iconic landscape are just as important as the views of it from outside.

The return of the railway has doubtless increased tourist trips to Abbotsford House. It is ironic that Bradshaw’s Handbook, the original railway tourist guide, described Abbotsford as

*“... overlooking the rippling Tweed, and the beautiful haughs of Ettrick on the opposite banks.”*

Those beautiful haughs did not include a modern housing estate which will be fully visible during the winter months and partially visible during the summer months.

In 2007 the Local Plan Enquiry held that “the major tree belt along the river cannot be relied upon to provide an effective screen, either at present (in winter

conditions and from higher elevations) or in the future (at all times and from lower as well as higher elevations)". Since that enquiry the tree belt has continued to age and has suffered significant damage in storms in 2011/12 and 2013/14.

The 2015 Local Plan Enquiry concluded that they "did not accept that the woodland screening would adequately mitigate the adverse impacts of the allocation on the setting of the house or the designed landscape."

Abbotsford House is now visible from the upper part of the site even in summer through gaps in the foliage. Any structures built on the higher parts of the site, particularly on or above the 120m contour would be visible from the upper stories of Abbotsford and from the surrounding designed landscape over the tops of the remaining tree screen.

Designating this site for housing directly contradicts volume 1 paragraph **4.6**.

### **Increased traffic**

Netherbarns, like the adjacent Kingsknowes estate, is too far from employers' premises, shops, schools and other services for residents to walk to, while the bus is expensive, infrequent and subject to the same traffic jams as cars.

Kingsknowes and by extension Netherbarns are equidistant from the two local railway stations and not within easy walking distance of either. Railway passengers from this site would drive to Tweedbank, as Kingsknowes residents generally do.

This allocation therefore contradicts volume 1 para **8.3** and policy **PMD1** in that it will directly lead to increased use of private cars.

### **Need for additional allocation**

There is no evidence of any need for this allocation. Appendix 2 para **4.9** points out the lower level of completions since the 2008 recession due to lack of developer and mortgage finance. This problem is only likely to be worsened by the economic effects of Covid 19 and brexit, which are also likely to further reduce demand.

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