



Telephone : [REDACTED]

e-mail ; [REDACTED]

**The Forward Planning Officer
Scottish Borders Council
Newtown St Boswells
TD6 0SA**

January 18th. 2021.

Ref : Local Development Plan – Site AGALA029 Netherbarns , Galashiels

Dear Sir ,

I am writing again (see correspondance April 2012) regarding the reappearance in the local development plan of the above site on the opposite bank to and facing Abbotsford House .

Given the fact that a previous proposal which resulted in a public inquiry with the subsequent adverse judgement by the appointed Reporter and subsequent decision by the Scottish Government I am therefore surprised that after such a short span of time this plan should be resuscitated .

I attach a formal objection . I trust that my real concerns will not be regarded as selfish , now and then ,as the proposed development – to my understanding - will not be visible from nor impede on my location and views .

My concerns relate as before to the following areas :

- 1 The Environment
- 2 The Ecology of the Area
- 3 Traffic and Safety
- 4 Impact on Abbotsford House and impact on Tourism in the area/region
- 5 Impact on thr Salmon beat
- 6 Impact on Galashiels' residents

Yours faithfully ,

DM Spawforth

FORMAL OBJECTION TO THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

SITE - AGALA029 - NETHERBARNES , GALASHIELS

1 The Environment

The north and south banks of the Tweed at this point are an area of great natural beauty ; a rural location yet so close to the Galashiels conurbation ; deserving of preservation and protection . Bar the arrival of the railway – very carefully screened - very little has changed since the 1850's as contemporary records show . The aspect from the A7 trunkroad is exceptional .

This environment has up to now been protected by the Council with Boleside Road classified as a national cycle route , the Southern Upland Way , a route for horses and riders not least on Common Riding and with various picnic spots . Not least the Boleside salmon beat is one of the renowned beats on the Tweed , indeed in Scotland , attracting – like Abbotsford House – visitors from all over the world .

The proposed development would greatly detract from this environment and the amenities .

2 The Ecology

This “ rural “ location is rich in wildlife – salmon and trout , otters , heron , owls , buzzards , deer in the river , on the banks , and in the copses and woodland

The effect of (a) inflow into the Tweed of surface run off water – inevitably containing pollutants – from the proposed development would contaminate the Tweed with major adverse effects on river and wildlife and with a vastly increased population in the area would significantly affect the population of the birds and animals cited above .

I would also have major concerns as to the capability of the local sewage works coping with such a major input .

Furthermore any drainage of any sort from the proposed development and associated works would not be able to be directed , either directly or indirectly , into Holmes Burn, the stream running west of Netherbarns farm down to the Tweed, as this would not be acceptable to the owners of properties through which the stream flows .Extra inflow would endanger these properties – for which the Council would be held responsible . Furthermore additional surface water or site water draining down Netherbarns Lane would cause problems for properties lower down and at the junction with Boleside Road , and privately owned land abutting the Tweed

3 Traffic and Safety

Boleside Road in its entire length is a very narrow single track road – lightly used by local residents, already designated by the Council as unsuitable for long vehicles , and where traffic calming measures were introduced by the council as a proactive rather than reactive safety initiative . The road is much frequented by walkers – long distance and strollers ~~cyclists~~ - ie a national cycle route and the Southern Upland Way – both major visitor attractions - come through here .

There is no pavement and very few places for cars to pass.

Along this road runs a very old and fragile cast iron high/ medium pressure gas pipeline which as Scottish Gas / Transco will confirm is subject to frequent leaks and not in a very safe state .

Any proposed entrance to/exit from the development site - vehicular or pedestrian - would be at the narrowest and most hazardous section of Boleside Road and The Council have a duty of care not to create / increase risk.

Access / exit to /from the proposed site via Netherbarns Lane would create major hazards at the junction with Boleside Road .

Equally access from the proposed site onto the A7 trunk road either directly or via Kingsnowe Estate would significantly add to the traffic on this road – already congested at peak times , so creating potential hazards and danger to life .

4 Impact on (a)Abbotsford House and (b)Tourism in the area

A Whilst it could be said that the proposed development is in line with the Kingsnowe Estate the contours of the site are significantly different , resulting in the proposed development being highly visible from and so close to Abbotsford House , the jewel of The Borders, attracting tourists from all over the world to visit the House and the beautiful grounds. Indeed a considerable amount of money- public and private – has been spent over recent years to enhance , expand the facilities and to make them and the grounds more accessible.

The view of a housing estate (no way can trees screen this , given the elevation of the site 1) opposite is not going to enhance the “atmosphere” of their visit to Abbotsford or help them recapture Scott’s Borders. Nor would it help promotion of accommodation , events at Abbotsford.

B Given the fact that the Scottish Borders is actively seeking to make Galashiels inter alia a place of interest for tourists , not least through the funding and siting of a building to house and display the tapestry of Scotland , I find it highly surprising that the same Council should risk adversely affecting tourism through the proposed development . The two policies – ie Tapestry and Netherbarns development opposite Abbotsford would seem to be diametrically opposed 1

Furthermore at this time – in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic – the long term consequences of which have yet to be experienced – and when the Borders depends heavily in terms of employment and income – it seems sheer folly to risk so much through this scheme . We should instead be preparing to promote , capitalize on our resources , restore employment . The proposed development would fly in the face of seeking to attract tourists back to the Borders and restore/create employment .

It would be most regrettable if the Council were to be cast in the role of “ killing the goose that lays the golden egg“ .

5 Impact on the salmon beat

The attraction of the Boleside beat for fishermen from all over the world ;similarly with a significant input to the local economy – Nil at the moment -due to the pandemic BUT will need promoting in coming years.

Noise, river and traffic pollution are not going to enhance this beat ! And will deter fishermen , and detract from the reputation of the Tweed as the salmon river in the UK .

6 Impact on residents of Galashiels

As the Council is very much aware this locality is much prized and valued by so many people in Galashiels – young and old alike, walking , cycling , driving , riding along Boleside Road with its developed and most beautiful woodland at this spot in particular ,It is a local beauty spot , valued even more highly during this pandemic !

It is respected too ; it is significant that vandalism is minimal, It is currently safe for all – children and elderly people included . For all the view and peace would be destroyed by the proposed development; any significant increase in any form of traffic/usage would be detrimental , indeed would render the road unsafe .

Conclusion

I would hope that before moving to confirm this proposed development area the Council will be mindful of the very major ,longstanding and irreversible effects ~~and will~~

- 1 Undertake a detailed and I environmental and ecological survey of the area – on the lines commisioned by the Scottish Government
- 2 Seek the views of (a) local residents - ie Boleside Road , Nether bank, Kingsnowe Estate , Netherbarns (b) Galashiels' residents .
- 3 Undertake a road traffic and safety survey – Boleside Road , Netherbarns Lane , A7 trunk road, Kingsnowe Estare .
- 4 Seek the views of Scottish Heritage and Abbotsford House
- 5 Seek the views of the Scottish Tourist and Borders Tourist Board
- 6 Seek theviews of the owners of the fishing beat .

DM Spawforth

January 18 2021 .