

Archived: 25 January 2021 08:58:30

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Fri, 22 Jan 2021 10:44:22

To:

Subject: Comments on Proposed Local Plan

Sensitivity: Normal

Attachments:

[REDACTED]

CAUTION: External Email

Sirs

I attach comments from A Heart for Duns for your consideration.

Kind regards

J Andrew Lester



PROPOSED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

COMMENTS ON VOLUME 2 FROM A HEART FOR DUNS

The Settlement Profile identifies the special characteristics of the town of Duns, identifies the sites allocated and talks about restrictions to development and the possibilities of building on the redevelopment of the Jim Clark Motorsport Museum without actually saying anything special about this.

The former Primary School is identified as a development opportunity, but no suggestions are made for use. The southern part of this site is very wet.

With an ageing population consideration should be given to encouraging the provision of a Nursing Home close to Duns. Many who require higher levels of care than that provided at the sheltered housing in Boston Court and Turnbull Court have to travel outwith Berwickshire to obtain suitable accommodation. A Nursing Home in the area would provide employment and a much needed resource.

The preferred areas for growth are the Primary School site, and for housing, the land south of Robertson's Garage and for mixed use the land to the south (SDUNS001), all of which will probably have ground condition problems. The area used to be known as the Bluidy Burn and apparently has a deep bed of peat just below the surface. This was a problem area when Berwickshire District Council bought land here for housing in the 70s. The new BHS was built on deep piles to overcome this problem.

The area around the boardwalk could be used as key greenspace but needs to be larger than that currently identified at GSDUNS001. The boardwalk is an important and well used facility so a better plan for this area will dramatically improve drainage in the area, particularly in Duns Park.

Land to the south of Aitken-Walker's Garage is allocated for housing but quite far from the schools.

The land at Hardens Road is quite detached from the town centre and there are no plans lodged for development. This area has been allocated for housing for some time now but only Wellrig Park has been developed. Once the current sites are developed then further development in this area will be resisted.

It would appear that, recently, an imbalance in housing provision has developed. We are thinking particularly of the increased demand for quality housing as there is a desire for relocation away from cities by those who can work from home. House prices have, according to one lawyer's property manager, surged by over 20% with houses "flying off the shelves". There are opportunities available but little in the way of development happening, particularly in the upper price range.

The area between the new Primary School and the Golf Club would be suitable for development but the farmer may be unwilling to sell.

Allocation of industrial sites at Cheeklaw and Peelrig, which have infrastructure in place, are quite adequate with potential for further expansion.

Mention is made of a “modest scale retail outlet” in the Berwickshire area with Duns being the preferred location. We know that the Co-op are very keen to relocate to a larger store and this may be the main driver. However, any development will need to meet the criteria in Volume 1 and the possibility of having a negative impact on the footfall in the town centre is a major risk. Traders in Duns talk about a noticeable reduction in footfall with the closure of the Royal Bank – an empty unit in a critical location – and moving the Co-op out of the centre will have a major impact. We would be very concerned about this.

The potential for the site south of Earlsmeadow (SDUNS001) should be examined as soon as possible with, as the Plan suggests, a Masterplan for the area including ground condition investigation, flood risk and mitigation, potential for events area to facilitate tourism events. I think that the area will be considerably larger than that currently identified but this could be an exciting development.

No mention is made of the Volunteer Hall as a valuable resource to the community or potential for expansion in the curtilage of the hall.

SUMMARY

- There is a deficit in provision of upper range housing sites being developed. Allowing new sites to be allocated to housing may encourage development of existing sites allocated to housing.
- We would encourage the development of a Masterplan for the site south of Earlsmeadow along with the land around to establish the extent of developable land, the potential to reduce flooding in the area and the provision of space to facilitate tourism events – possibly in conjunction with the Jim Clark Motorsport Museum.
- The housing developments at the Sand Pit field need have better road and pedestrian links to the town. We would encourage the creation of an access road from the A6105 as suggested.
- We welcome the investment made in the industrial sites at Station Road/Cheeklaw with further potential.
- We are concerned that any modest scale retail outlet in Duns would have an adverse effect on the town centre. The existing Co-op is an important anchor point and any relocation of the Co-op will probably have a negative effect on the footfall in the town centre.
- The old Primary School might be suitable as a potential craft and exhibition centre for the area and this could be included in the Masterplan as mentioned above. Opportunities exist to create employment and a tourist attraction.
- The area needs a Nursing Home and support from the Social Work Department will be vital if one is to be provided
- The Volunteer Hall has developed into an important community resource. It is close to the town centre, is accessible and is planning to expand. The Council should recognise the importance of the hall and assist A Heart for Duns in ensuring its sustainability by encouraging the development of a mixed use Business Centre as part of the modernisation programme.
- A Heart for Duns is a registered charity and Development Trust who are keen to be involved in the potential development of the town, particularly in assisting with community engagement.

Andrew Lester

