

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 January 2021 17:06
To: localplan
Subject: AGALA029 Netherbarns

CAUTION: External Email

My wife and I, as supporters of the Abbotsford Trust that bring so much to the region, wish to object in the strongest terms to this proposed housing development as it now stands. Abbotsford has explained its objections but we list them again below

The Abbotsford Trust objects to the development of the Netherbarns site because the associated light, sound and visual intrusions will impact adversely on its unique heritage assets, historic setting and the cultural landscape of the Scottish Borders and Tweed Valley. This impact will reduce the enjoyment of visitors to Abbotsford and reduce the huge economic contribution which Abbotsford makes to the region.

The Abbotsford Trust has based its objection on the National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3):

NPF3 recognises the contribution made by our cultural heritage to our economy, cultural identity and quality of life. Planning has an important role to play in maintaining and enhancing the distinctive and high-quality, irreplaceable historic places which enrich our lives, contribute to our sense of identity and are an important resource for our tourism and leisure industry.

Our objection follows previous ones to earlier reports, and now points out incorrect statements within the Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) relating to the site and its impact on Abbotsford. It is evidenced with new data and statistics.

1) LDP2 is based on incorrect information

The LDP2 is based on incorrect advice in the supporting Full Site Assessment of the Netherbarns site (page 252). It states:

“These proposals confirm the site will not be visible from Abbotsford House during the Summer months and in the Winter months (when Abbotsford House is closed to the public) photomontages have shown that only fleeting views of very small parts of the site could be seen, but proposed housing (i.e. this would be a low density development of 45 units) would not be located within these visible locations”

This is incorrect for the following reasons:

- a) It ignores the fragility of the mature tree screening on which the proposal is dependent, and which was made clear in Abbotsford’s MIR objection of Feb 2019. This is based on professional advice received by the Trust with regard to management of the screening woodland in the Trust’s ownership. It is highly likely that sight lines to the development will be created as mature trees fall naturally or are felled as part of active woodland management.
- b) It is incorrect to state that Abbotsford is closed in winter, and misleading to suggest by this statement that visits to Abbotsford in the winter are negligible:
 - Abbotsford is now open annually in December.
 - The Visitor Centre has been open all year round since 2014.
 - Restoration of Scott’s paths in 2018 has led to increased visits to Abbotsford’s estate all year-round.

- A 'people counter' sited on the paths at Abbotsford (from summer 2020) recorded 13,000 visits in December 2020 alone, and 84,000 visits since it was introduced in mid July 2020.
- 30% of November & December visits are from dusk when lights from Netherbarns would be particularly visible through the thin tree cover.

2) LDP2 does not properly assess Netherbarn's impact on Abbotsford's contribution to the region

Abbotsford has welcomed over 160,000 paying visitors from July 2014 – 2019. A sustained annual increase in visits of 82% (prior to Covid-19), contributing a total £7.4m to the local economy and supporting 148 jobs, as well as creating an additional 35 new jobs at Abbotsford.

In 2019, the Abbotsford Trust adopted a strategic plan which includes the following goal:

Our place in the Community: We will be a catalyst for improving the life of our region by creating opportunities to positively affect direct and indirect employment, skills and employability, mental health, social isolation, learning and sense of identity.

This goal is dependent on a number of long-term targets which include safeguarding Scott's landscape, improving the visitor experience, and increasing visits year round. None of the above has been referenced in either LDP2 or its supporting documents, and yet our objections have made clear that we consider the development of the Netherbarns site as detrimental to achieving these targets.

Surely it is the purpose of National Planning Framework 3 to enable such ambition and potential?

3) An eyesore and a building site when the eyes of the world are on Abbotsford for Scott's 250th Anniversary & Year of Scotland's Stories in 2021-2022?

We are grateful for the support of Scottish Government, the South of Scotland Enterprise Agency and VisitScotland towards celebrating Scott's 250th Anniversary in 2021-22. Celebrations are being planned by an international partnership of 54 organisations led by Abbotsford, with Abbotsford at the centre of the visitor experience.

But as the eyes of the world fall on Abbotsford during the 250th anniversary celebrations and the Year of Scotland's Stories in 2022, how will we explain the sights and sounds of diggers tearing up the view?

David McNaughton

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