

Archived: 27 January 2021 23:33:41

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Mon, 25 Jan 2021 16:38:08 +0000ARC

To:

Subject: Objection to proposal AGALA029 Netherbarns in the Local Development Plan [re Abbotsford]

Sensitivity: Normal

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CAUTION: External Email

From [REDACTED]

To: Forward Planning, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Scottish Borders, TD6 0SA

Dear Sirs

We wish to object to the proposal to build houses directly opposite Abbotsford.

1. We heard about this from The Georgian Group, London, an architectural and amenity group of which we are members. We couldn't believe that such a crass proposal, an insult to such a towering figure in the Scottish psyche, could even be envisaged.
2. Large sums of money, **with official backing**, have been spent recently on restoring the House and Policies. [We visited it before these works, but still remember our visit with gratitude].
3. Only in 2015 was the former Waverley Route of British Railways extended to Galashiels and **Tweedbank** railway station from Edinburgh. Surely terminating so near to Abbotsford shows its status for nearly 200 years as a major attraction?
4. This is reflected for instance in *Black's Guide to Scotland, 15th Edition, 1861*, reflecting the availability of trains from Edinburgh, and devoting two illustrations to the House.
5. We agree with the [The Abbotsford Trust](#)'s objection to the development of the Netherbarns site because the associated light, sound and visual intrusions will ruin its heritage assets, historic setting and the precious cultural landscape of the Scottish Borders and Tweed Valley.
6. This impact will reduce the enjoyment of visitors to Abbotsford and reduce the economic contribution which Abbotsford makes to the region now and in the future.

The Abbotsford Trust bases our objection on the National Planning Framework 3:

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.

The objection follows previous ones to earlier reports, and 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 the following incorrect advice in the supporting Full Site Assessment of the Netherbarns site (page 252):

“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. **How** can competent woodland management be guaranteed for ever? Planting a thin screen of trees which will take years to mature and would not adequately hide the development is symptomatic of the visual and technical illiteracy of the Application.

b) It is incorrect to state that Abbotsford House is closed in winter: misleading to suggest by this statement that visits to Abbotsford in the winter are negligible. Abbotsford House is now open annually in December. The Visitor Centre has been open all year since 2014. **Restoration of Scott’s paths in 2018** has led to increased visits to walk Abbotsford’s estate year-round. A ‘people counter’ sited on the paths at Abbotsford from July 2020 recorded 13,000 visits in Dec 2020 alone, and 84,000 visits since it was introduced in mid July 2020.

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), contributing a total £7.4m to the local economy and supporting **148** jobs, as well as creating an additional 35 new jobs at Abbotsford.

The Abbotsford Trust in 2019 adopted a strategic plan which includes the following goal:

Its 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) Scott’s 250th Anniversary & Year of Scotland’s Stories - A building site when the eyes of the world are on Abbotsford?

The Trust is 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.

As the eyes of the world fall on Abbotsford during the Year of Scotland’s Stories in 2022, how will we explain the sights and sounds of diggers which greet our international visitors?

Walter Scott believed that ‘his oaks would outlive his laurels’, i.e. that his landscape would be more precious and loved in the future than his books. Please do not let his 250th anniversary mark his betrayal.

The hope is to forestall the site's inclusion in future Local Development Plans by putting forward our case, **now and forever**, on the detrimental impact of a development at Netherbarns on Abbotsford, the jewel in the crown of the Borders.

4) LIGHT POLLUTION: 30% of Nov & Dec visits are from dusk when **lights** from Netherbarns would be particularly visible through the thin tree cover.

5) In such a lightly populated part of Scotland there must surely be other sites where housing can be erected. Will the proposed Application **add** to the provision of housing for Essential workers, such as NHS and Police. By how much, and under what conditions?

Yours faithfully

Michael Statham-Fletcher

Carole Statham-Fletcher