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From: [REDACTED]  
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To:  
Subject: Objection to Netherbarns Development AGALA029 in LDP2  
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CAUTION: External Email

Scottish Borders Council  
Council Headquarters  
Newton St Boswells  
TD6 0SA

Dear SBC Planning

### **Objection to Netherbarns Development AGALA029 in LDP2**

The Faculty of Advocates Abbotsford Collections Trust is writing to you to object to the Netherbarns site being included in the Local Development Plan 2.

The Trust owns many important artifacts belonging to Scott, including Scott's 9000 books which remain in his library at his home at Abbotsford much as he left it. The library is one of a relatively small number of world-class writers' libraries. We share the concerns raised by The Abbotsford Trust regarding the proposed development at Netherbarns.

We have based 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 Faculty of Advocates Abbotsford Collections Trust objects to the development of the Netherbarns site because the associated light, sound and visual intrusions will impact adversely on its 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 economic contribution which Abbotsford makes to the region now and in the future.

**This risks reducing visitor growth to Abbotsford and consequently risks putting pressure on the capacity of The Abbotsford Trust to care for the collection to the standards we aspire to. Our shared aspiration is to support The Abbotsford Trust to achieve Museum Accreditation, the official benchmark for collections care. But this will only be achieved if the Trust can invest in reaching the required standards and maintaining them.**

#### **1) Screening of the development from Abbotsford will be insufficient**

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

"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 unavoidable that sight lines to the development will be created as mature trees fall naturally or are felled as part of active woodland management.

Ownership of the scrub land on the old railway line has yet to be determined and therefore active woodland management at that location cannot be assumed.

- b) It is incorrect to state that Abbotsford House is closed in winter, and misleading to suggest by this statement that visits to Abbotsford in the winter are negligible and of little value.

Abbotsford House is now open annually in Dec, forming a vital part of the Trust’s strategy for increased visits and income year-round. Lights from Netherbarns will be clearly visible from the House at this time of the year. 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 (previous estimates were 20,000 walkers annually). 30% of Nov & Dec visits are from dusk when lights from Netherbarns would be particularly visible through the thin tree cover.

The marked rise in visits to Abbotsford’s estate since the advent of Covid demonstrates the particular value of Scott’s landscape as a place to escape to, refresh and energise. Accessible rural beauty spots on the fringes of urban settlements are increasingly rare and valued. Do not lose such a treasure just as it is most needed.

## 2) **Scott’s 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary & Year of Scotland’s Stories - A building site when the eyes of the world are on Abbotsford?**

Celebrations are being planned by an international partnership of 54 organisations led by The Abbotsford Trust, with Abbotsford and the collection we own at the centre of the visitor experience.

Abbotsford has worked hard to secure TV and media interest in filming at Abbotsford over the next few years, and anticipate that aerial landscape drone footage will be a feature of most filming.

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 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary be the year Scotland proves him wrong.

We hope that we can 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.

Yours sincerely,

  
**Dean of Faculty and Chairman, FAACT**



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