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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 24 January 2021 22:24
To: localplan
Subject: Proposed Housing AGALAO 29 at Netherbarns - Amendment to Local Development Plan - OBJECTION
Attachments: [REDACTED]

CAUTION: External Email

Dear Sir/Madam,

I attach a letter of objection to amendment of the Local Development Plan in relation to proposed housing AGALAO 29 at Netherbarns.

I would be most grateful if you could confirm for me that you have received this message and that you have been able to open the attachment, as I understand that the last date for submissions is Monday, 25 January 2021.

Yours faithfully,

David M. Walker

[REDACTED]

Forward Planning
Borders Council Headquarters
Newton St Boswells
TD6 0SA

19 January 2021

*From: Professor Emeritus David M. Walker, O.B.E., LL.D., D. Litt., F.S.A., F.R.S.E.,
Hon. F.R.I.A.S.*

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Proposed Housing AGALAO 29 at Netherbarns:
Amendment to Local Development Plan
OBJECTION**

I object to this amendment to Local Development Plan 2 as the one-time lead adviser on buildings in Scotland to the National Heritage Memorial Fund, 1980-93, and as an expert adviser on a U.K.-wide basis to the Heritage Lottery Fund, 1995-99. It will have an unacceptably adverse effect on the setting of Abbotsford and on the viability of its trust.

I do not think it necessary to spell out the building history of Abbotsford or to provide any biographical details of Sir Walter Scott as these will be well-known to your Council. What I would emphasise is that both the house and its creator were and are of international significance and not just of a national or regional importance. Scott was the pioneer of the well-researched historical novel. He was internationally recognised as such in his lifetime, and Edinburgh's Sir Walter Scott Monument was and still is the largest and finest memorial ever erected to any author. As Hermann Muthesius put it in *Das Englische Haus* in 1904 his writing "contributed more to Romanticism than any other phenomenon" in influencing the nineteenth and early twentieth century revival of medieval and early renaissance architecture not just in Britain but in the western world generally.

Abbotsford was a turning-point in British architectural history as the first house to revive later sixteenth and early seventeenth century Scots architectural forms. It was an expression of Scott's interests and personality unmatched in the house of any other writer. It has come down to us complete with its furnishings and antiquarian collections exactly as Scott created it and worked in it, thanks to the public spirit, past and present, of the Faculty of Advocates which rescued the collections from dispersal in the financial crisis of 1826-27; the care of successive generations of his family who kept the house open to the public from the 1830s onwards; and a very substantial investment of public funding. Its gothic interiors and the collections Scott formed within them are among the most important of their period anywhere in the western world for which see, inter alia, the Victoria & Albert Museum's Clive

Wainwright in Chapter 6 of *The Romantic Interior* (1989), pages 147-207, which sets out how Scott assembled them.

The gardens and the designed landscape surrounding the house are of great importance and were rated Outstanding in the *Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* from the very beginning. They were designed by Scott himself who set out his ideas on gardening in the *Quarterly Review* in 1828 and who was consulted by other landowners on the design of their policies. They entailed very substantial earthworks, notably at the terraces on the north-west side of the house facing the proposed development. After almost two hundred years the landscape now exists as Scott visualised it, commenting that “his oaks would outlive his laurels” (*i.e.*, his books). The issue now is whether or not your Council is content to see the setting of his house and its landscape ruined and its value as a destination for cultural tourism degraded.

The proposition in your Council’s full site assessment in Local Development Plan 2 that the screening of this development need only be effective in the summer-months tourist season is outrageous and would be risible were it not so serious. This is a site of international significance, not a routine listed building case where token concessions to the setting might be deemed sufficient. Neither the house-builders nor those who buy the houses will want either the existing trees or those proposed to be planted which will take many years to mature before they have any effect. There will be no incentive to maintain them or replace them when they are past maturity or suffer wind-blow as views of the river and the Abbotsford landscape will be a selling-pitch in the years to come. Street lighting will be a problem, creating light pollution at dusk where there should be none.

The formation of the Abbotsford Trust following the death of Mrs Patricia Maxwell Scott, the restoration of the house and its gardens, and the provision of a superb visitor centre – a major tourist destination in itself – have been one of the greatest cultural heritage achievements in Scotland, and indeed in the U.K., since the former National Land Fund was reconstituted as the National Heritage Memorial Fund forty years ago, and at international level that has been recognised by an award from Europa Nostra. Visitor numbers rose spectacularly on an annual basis prior to Covid-19, contributing £7.4 million to the local economy and providing a large number of high-quality jobs. It should not be necessary to state that consciously degrading what has been achieved at Abbotsford to provide a site for speculative house-builders will discourage the heritage agencies from making any further investment in Borders heritage projects.

Your Council rightly refused consent for housing at this site some years ago. It is hard to see why it is now being actively encouraged when the success of schemes such as that at Abbotsford have led the National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3) to state:

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 places which enrich our lives, contribute to our sense of identity and are an important resource for our tourism and leisure industry.

In international terms Abbotsford is one of the most important cultural sites we have in Scotland and should continue to be so as long as civilisation lasts. The Abbotsford project was a great achievement on the part of those who formed the trust: the National Trust for

Scotland has not been able to mount any such rescue operation for the last quarter of a century.

Your Council should therefore not allow the setting of Abbotsford to be degraded in this way given the adverse effect that will have on visitor numbers, the viability of the trust and the tourist industry in the Borders area: any economic benefit from the housing estate would be short-term and can be met elsewhere. Your Council should not expose itself – or Scotland as a whole – to the ridicule of international visitors at seeing such a development from the rooms in which Scott lived or from the gardens he created. This element of the Local Development Plan should be withdrawn and thought given to the future ownership and management of this land as a key element in the Abbotsford landscape.

Yours sincerely,

David M. Walker