

Forward Planning Team  
Planning Department  
Scottish Borders Council  
Newtown St Boswells  
TD6 0SA

8 Abbotsview Gardens  
Galashiels  
TD1 3ER

20 February 2014

Dear Sirs

**Local Development Plan Comments**

Please see the enclosed comments. I did try to add this online using your OLDP system but it merely returns a 404 error 'URL not found on this server'. This in itself contradicts para 11.4.1 of the proposed plan as consultation can hardly be meaningful if comments are directed to a non-existent or inaccessible website address.

Yours faithfully



Alastair Stavert



## **AGALA 029**

This site was probably the most controversial proposal of the last local plan and both its inclusion in that plan and a proposed housing development were rejected at two separate public enquiries, mainly due to the effect development would have on Abbotsford House and its designed landscape.

Since those enquiries were held efforts have been made to return Abbotsford House to the major tourist attraction it once was. The return of the railway will likely increase tourist trips to Abbotsford House. It is ironic that Bradshaw's Handbook, the original railway tourist guide, described Abbotsford as '... overlooking the rippling Tweed, and the beautiful haughs of Ettrick on the opposite banks.' Those beautiful haughs did not include a modern housing estate which will be fully visible during the winter months and partially visible during the summer months. Designating this site for housing directly contradicts paragraph 3.17.

Since the previous public enquiries the tree screen has been further damaged, particularly during the storms of winter 2011/12 and 2013/14, and Abbotsford House is now visible from the upper part of the site even in summer through gaps in the foliage. Any structures built on the higher parts of the site, particularly on or above the 120m contour would be visible from the upper stories of Abbotsford and from the surrounding designed landscape over the tops of the remaining tree screen.

Abbotsford House was the first example of the Scots Baronial architectural style and it is therefore imperative that not only the actual building, but its wider setting is protected from any further development that could conceivably destroy that unique setting.

Development on this site would contradict paragraphs 8.7.1, 8.10.1 and 8.10.3.

Every working day there is already stationary traffic on the A7 at the entrance to the Kingsknowes estate. Netherbarns is too far from existing employers for residents to walk and the bus is expensive and subject to the same traffic jams as cars. The existing St Peters Primary School is too far for small children to walk to unaccompanied from Kingsknowes, which results in them being driven to school by their parents. This problem will worsen if the Galashiels schools are centralised at the Academy site (which would be in easy walking distance of Hollybush SGALA016).

Netherbarns is also equidistant from the two local railway stations, which will lead to commuters either driving to the station or, having got into their cars, not using the railway at all. This allocation therefore contradicts paras 2.20 and 5.1.2 in that it will not support the public transport network or contribute to climate change objectives.

There is no evidence of any need for this allocation. Para **3.6** points out that there is currently a generous supply of housing land. Development has started on very few of the sites allocated in the last local plan and there is no evidence of increased demand.

The local community made it quite clear during the previous public enquiries that housing on this site was not supported. By ignoring the hundreds of objections to this site being allocated for housing in the last local plan this allocation is contradicting para **11.4.1** that community engagement must be meaningful and proportionate.

The map of the site as it appears on this document has removed some of the existing landscaping from the eastern boundary of the site, including trees covered by preservation orders. This contradicts para **8.13**.