

Hill, Laura (Planning HQ)

From: Gordon Harrison [REDACTED]
Sent: 02 March 2014 13:43
To: localplan
Subject: Ettrick (Hopehouse) Objections
Attachments: Ettrick Hopehouse Objection.docx

Plans and Research Team
Scottish Borders Council

Following further research and consultations with members of the community, please find attached an additional submission of my objections on the Ettrick (Hopehouse) proposal. These are based on the **Supplementary Planning Guidance on New Housing in the Borders Countryside, Policy and Guidance Note, December 2008**. I hope this is acceptable.

Please acknowledge receipt and confirmation that it is acceptable.

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**Scottish Borders Council Proposed Plan 2013
ETTRICK (HOPEHOUSE)**

Objection to sites AETTR0002 and AETTR004

Further to my objections on the SBC Proposed Plan 2013 raised in my email to you dated 20th February, I wish to provide some additional reasons for the removal of sites AETTR0042 and AETTR004 in the proposed local plan.

As far as I can determine from reading the supplementary planning guidance on **New Housing in the Borders Countryside, Policy and Guidance Note, December 2008**, there are a number of reasons why the above mentioned sites cannot be allowed. I shall address these in chronological order:

1. The Foreword states: *"The Borders countryside is a precious and finite asset and comprises some of the finest unspoilt scenery in the United Kingdom which is appreciated by visitors, residents and investors. The utmost care must be taken to reduce negative impacts of development on the countryside."*

The sites in question are outside an identified building group. They lie in essential agricultural fields. The area is beautiful and has impressive views. Siting 10 houses in these fields will severely damage the beauty of the place, contrary to the wishes of the foreword and the community.

2. On page 6 of the guidance note The Local Plan policy D1 mentions that business, tourism and leisure development in the countryside. The caravan park at Hopehouse, far from being the small business mentioned in the settlement profile, does in fact hold 70 plots and caters for around 300 tourists, and is a significant contribution to the vibrancy of the community. Why does the settlement profile state that this caravan park is small?

The owner has stated that several static caravan owners will leave if new houses are built in the adjacent fields, thus damaging this business.

3. The Ettrick (Hopehouse) proposal also falls foul of several criteria contained on Page 8.
 - a. The fields are essential for the harvesting of hay. Being a valley, level fields suitable for hay making are in short supply. Allowing housing development on these fields, which are also on a flood plain, should not be allowed.
 - b. There are no satisfactory water supply and drainage facilities.
 - c. The 10 houses would have an adverse effect on the countryside amenity and landscape.

4. Page 10, paragraph 2.b. refers to building groups. The opening paragraph states:

PAN 36 indicates that in addition to new housing development in settlements there is scope for adding to, or creating, small groups of housing in the countryside provided that they are sympathetic in terms of scale, proportion and materials to other buildings in the locality.

I submit that there is no need for the potential to build 10 new houses here. Development AETTR003 contains 3 plots that have remained unsold for around 10 years. On the opposite side of the road there are 2 further plots that have also remained unsold for several years, although these never seem to be mentioned in the plan or previous plans – although they should have been.

So there are in fact 5 plots that have remained unsold for many years, each of which has outline permission for a detached dwelling. This proves that there is no demand in the area.

The plan for an additional 10 houses is clearly unnecessary, not to scale and unsympathetic.

5. Page 10, paragraph 2.b.1 states that a group will be identifiable by a sense of place. It defines this further on page 11, and states that other factors **will** be taken into account: these include
- a. The scale and siting of new development should reflect and respect the character of the existing group (clearly the plan does not)
 - b. that sites should not normally break into a previously undeveloped field (clearly the plan does this)

6. Page 11, paragraph 2.b.2 refers to the 100% rule. This prohibits building groups from being developed by more than 100%

As the existing site at AETTR003 has a capacity of 5, surely this rule allows for only 5 more?

7. Page 23, section 4, paragraph 4.1 refers to Roads and Access. As there is no public transport in the area and the sites are 16 miles or so from either Selkirk or Hawick, there is every possibility that each house will need parking for 2 cars. Not nice to look at and certainly not good for the environment.

As the plan is for two blocks of 5 houses, the SBC would need to upgrade the fields to public road standard, with street lighting. This would be out of character for the area, which has no street lighting, and would damage the beauty of the landscape and preclude any proposal the Ettrick and Yarrow Tourism Group has in proposing a "Dark Sky Park". This would damage the essential local tourism businesses initiative.

8. Paragraph 4.2 refers to water and drainage. It states:

Proposals for new houses in the countryside which cannot connect to a public service will require to be accompanied by adequate evidence to demonstrate that private facilities for water supply and drainage are available.

The previous supply for Hopehouse cottage was from Tushielaw, but this was cut when a forestry service road was built. The new supply for the cottage is from a drilled well, which cost around £14,000. There is no guarantee that there is an adequate water supply from the same source.

Where is the evidence of an adequate water supply? If there is none, what is the point in putting forward a proposal for 10 new houses, contrary to this provision? Surely a survey should have been carried out before vast amounts of time and money were spent on this proposal?

Incidentally, the Settlement Profile states that there is a septic tank at Ettrick but not at Hopehouse. Ettrick is over 3 miles away from Hopehouse! This appears to be another indication of a poor grip on the realities of this proposal.

9 Page 28, Policy H5 states:

Proposals for new housing in the countryside outwith defined settlements but associated with existing building groups will normally be supported where they are in accordance with the provisions of the policy guidance 'New Housing in the Borders Countryside'. Favourable consideration is more likely where development proposals:

- (i) are readily accessible to the strategic public transport network,**
- (ii) employ energy efficient and/or innovative design principles,**
- (iii) incorporate employment-generating uses appropriate to a countryside setting.**

There is no public transport network. There is no employment, and no employment generating possibility as communications are dreadfully poor.

10 The Settlement Profile states that there is a requirement for affordable housing under the provisions of Policy H1. This is to be guided by any Housing Needs Assessment **already undertaken.**

Page 29, Policy H1 covers Affordable Housing. The first sentence states:

Where the Local Housing Strategy or local needs assessment identifies a local housing need, the Council will require the provision of a proportion of land for affordable or special needs housing, both on allocated or windfall sites.

The second paragraph of the Justification of Policy H1 states:

Ongoing research as part of the local housing needs assessment has identified, and will continue to identify, areas where there is a demonstrable need for affordable housing.

Presumably there is a local needs assessment but I cannot find any evidence that it has been carried out. I am at a loss as to how the plan can insist on affordable housing if there has not been an assessment.

If there has not been an assessment there is no justification for affordable housing.

11. Page 37 provides Policy G8 – Development Outwith Development Boundaries

Development of sites AETTR002 and AETTR004 is outside the previously identified development site AETTR003, which is within a building group.

There is no justification for allowing development of AETTR002 and AETTR004 because:

- a. There are no job-generating or economic justification
- b. There is no need for affordable housing
- c. There is no shortfall of a land supply in this area as there are 4 other plots for sale
- d. There is NO community benefit whatsoever; in fact the 10 house proposal is a community detriment and deprives the farmer of hay meadows.
- e. There is no logical need for an extension of the built-up area.
- f. It is out of scale.
- g. It damages the character and visual cohesion of the area.
- h. It will have an adverse effect on the landscape.

In summary, I believe there is absolutely no case to support the plan to allow the building of any further houses in the Ettrick (Hopehouse) area. There is no need for these houses. It will damage the fragile tourism trade that relies on the beauty of the area and it will damage the environment. It appears to be a policy driven proposal that has not been properly thought through.

I feel the community should have been consulted prior to any work done on this proposal as this would have saved SBC time, ratepayers a lot of money, and further community stress.

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2nd March 2014