

Upper Faldonside  
Melrose  
TD6 9BG



2nd March 2014

Dear Sirs,

I hope this finds the development plan team in good order.

Please excuse this rather bitty response to the LDP consultation. I started completing an online response - which I thought was a really good tool (once I had managed to find it) but recently I have not been able to access it, so my comments below are largely from memory and in haste, for which I apologise.

**Wind Energy SPG**

I'm not sure if this is subject to the present consultation but ask that the following reporters' findings be taken account of if possible. (My colouring.) The first refers to ambiguity in mapping. It may of course be that more precise boundaries for the various areas of protection would be equally problematic, as this is not a black and white science.

From Bassendean Hill DPEA report:

15. *The council's published 2011 Supplementary Planning Guidance on Wind Energy [SPG] includes a spatial strategy map of the entire council area at a very small scale. This uses different coloured pixels to distinguish among other things "areas of significant protection" from "areas of minor constraint". Elected members were advised that the appeal site falls within an area of significant protection and that an area of minor constraint lies to its east. This degree of confidence is not justified by the very poor resolution of this map when it is enlarged. I understand the basis for that statement - namely a submitted enlarged extract. However I find it impossible to reliably state - on the basis of that map in a strategic document - which particular level of restraint applies to the appeal site. If the authors of SPG had intended that map to be interpreted in a binding and site-specific way, they would have instead used a series of maps at a much larger scale. That would be the only way of ensuring reliable site-specific interpretations.*

The second is more easily addressed:

From Penmanshiel DPEA report:

22. *Figure 5 of the SPG identifies visually sensitive land by landscape character type. A total of 23 of the 30 landscape character types identified in The Borders Landscape Character Assessment are listed. I find it significant that character type 21 - Coastal*

*Moorland is not listed there. At the hearing session it was contended for the council that character type 21 ought to be added to that list.*

### **Outdoor Workers near wind turbines**

I was struck on the Rowantree site visit to what extent shepherds, who may spend many hours a day working near the Toddleburn turbines, are affected, not least by noise. If it is not included already, I request that as well as the amenity of those who live near wind turbines, the amenity of those working out of doors near wind turbines should also be listed as a material factor. Clearly whether or not the land is enclosed would make a difference to the amount of time farm workers may spend in a place.

### **Protection of business and industrial land.**

While I agree with the sentiment in 3. below, the last sentence may be too lenient, and it would be better to say "...alternative uses may be supported."

*3. LOCAL SITES Although local sites are allocated for business and industrial use, these are considered to have a lower priority and need for retention in the hierarchy of all business and industrial sites. Consequently alternative uses are likely to be supported.*

## **CORE ACTIVITY AREAS IN TOWN CENTRES**

*1.2 In order to support the vitality and viability of core activity areas, acceptable uses are restricted to Class 1 (shops) and 3 (food and drink) of the use Class Order. proposals for uses within Class 2 (financial, professional and other services) of the use Class Order would only be acceptable where they contribute positively to the core retail activity of the area and will be assessed against the following:*

*• How the proposed use would contribute to joint shopping trips; • Footfall contribution; • Current vacancy and footfall rates; • longevity of vacancy; marketing history of premises; and • ability to retain shop frontage.*

### **Comment**

I am not sure why class 2 uses should be so restricted - it seems pretty draconian: they tend to sit perfectly well in town centres, and where else are they expected to go? Furthermore, involving SBC in research and studies could be costly and complicated, with much scope for challenge.

### **Darnick**

There is mention of anti-coalescence policy in relation to Darnick / Melrose. Darnick / Tweedbank should also be mentioned (as it is in the Tweedbank profile)

## **Tweedbank**

If it is not already, then the area being discussed for allotments and a community orchard in Tweedbank (Killy Holes? - Jason Hedley will know) should be allocated as green space. This is an important and very worthwhile project for the village.

## **Earlston**

Does not Earlston deserve a “town centre” in the Central Spatial Strategy map? Earlston in fact has one of the best high streets in the Borders, both in terms of layout (broad and varied) and buildings (many fine buildings, including a variety of shop-fronts which are remarkably intact). These qualities are too frequently overlooked, and should be recognised in the settlement profile. There is considerable scope for enhancement of the High Street by tree planting. Possible candidate for Conservation Area?

A safeguarding to allow an axis parallel to the High Street should be considered - through the old Earlston high school site and industrial estate, and possibly on to the A68 (difficult at the western end, I know.) It might also run further to the east of the old high school, past the Turford Industrial Estate. Earlston is at one end of a principal east-west route: congestion is already problematic at times and will only get worse. It is critical that safeguarding should be put in place now, given the redevelopment opportunity of the old high school site and other development sites currently being proposed. Please treat this point as an **objection** (to non-inclusion of safeguarding for a parallel axis.)

## **Monitoring of Central Borders Development**

The central Tweed valley from upstream of Galashiels to downstream of St. Boswells has not only some of the Borders finest landscape and cultural assets, including the Eildons, Melrose and Dryburgh Abbeys, Abbotsford and its designed landscape, and some very distinctive settlements; it also has borne significant development over the last decades, much of it insensitive, and now faces growing pressure for development, not least with the prospect of the railway. Hence the importance of the Countryside around Town policy.

As has been suggested before, a useful process would be the taking of photographs at a set time of each year in clear weather, from say a dozen viewpoints: for example the top of the Eildons (in various directions), the Roger Quinn stone, from the upper side of Gattonside and so on. This would enable a picture to be gained of approaching “tipping points” - some of which have already been reached - and would help forward planning as well as the learning from past mistakes and successes. The cost would be minimal. SNH might be persuaded to undertake this, in relation to the Eildon and Leaderfoot NSA. I will try to forward some examples of photos taken from such places in the past. If the council is unwilling to undertake this then please could this suggestion be put to the DPEA by way of an **objection** (to non-inclusion of annual photographic monitoring as set out above.) It may be that such monitoring could be considered in other parts of the Borders too. Peebles comes to mind.

Finally, I would like to object to aspects of the proposed Netherbarns allocation, and to mention of Broomilees as a possible longer term mixed use site.

## **NETHERBARNNS**

I do not need to remind SBC of the value of Abbotsford and its designed landscape - these are internationally important cultural treasures, and of considerable economic importance to the wider Borders. Members and planners alike will also be familiar with statements that appear time and again, from top to bottom in planning policy, about the commitment to protect and enhance our heritage and about how new development should not be allowed to damage important assets.

A few really well-designed houses and a small paddock or two with substantial tree-planting at Netherbarns could have benefits:

- bringing closure to the inappropriate expansion of Galashiels Westwards up the Tweed Valley
- protecting in the longer term the setting of Abbotsford and the designed landscape
- restoring in part the loss of fine trees on this edge of Galashiels
- improving the setting of listed buildings Netherby and Brunswickhill
- breaking, in time, the hard lower edge of Netherbank which is visible even from Scott's View
- considerably lessening the impact of decay in the beech trees on the North bank of the Tweed opposite Abbotsford
- mitigating nearby developments
- providing local amenity
- helping redress the Scottish Borders' significant deficiency in native woodland

Substantial tree-planting is crucial to the success of such a scheme, at least half of the site I would suggest. As always it is difficult to pin down numbers of houses, but less than a dozen would be a good guide, preferably with a mix of sizes from one or two villas to much smaller properties, reflecting the historic development on the edge of Galashiels within well-planted grounds.

The current proposals are entirely at odds with this. 45 houses, or even half that number, would inevitably constitute a suburban development which could not but damage the setting of Abbotsford.

I therefore **object** to the indicative number of houses exceeding 12.

I note that a brief would be prepared, which is clearly important to the site, but I **object** to there not being mention of substantial tree-planting, and I **object** to the skimpiness of landscaping indicated on the plan which would be quite inadequate for this site given that many of the sensitive views into the site are from higher ground.

I also **object** to the mention of further consideration of educational uses on the site. Not only would it be difficult to accommodate a school on a sloping site, but the levels of lighting and noise associated with a school would inevitably be damaging to Abbotsford and its setting, which visitors may have travelled great distances to enjoy. I am also mindful of the very difficult access, for pedestrians as well as cars, from the Kingsknowes development onto the A7.

The opportunity to finish this corner of Galashiels in a way which could improve things is there for the taking. By contrast if the present proposals are allowed then future generations will question how a civilised country could ever have allowed a suburban development to be planted, as I once heard it described, “smack in the face of a national treasure.”

Below is an extract from the report on the 2006 / 2007 Local Plan Inquiry in relation to Netherbarns. Some of the detail has changed, but the substantive points, which are well and clearly expressed, remain the same and I ask that they be taken account of again now. I know this was written some time ago, and in response to a higher indicative allocation, but on reading it carefully it expresses exactly the concerns I wish to be taken into account today.

#### **EXTRACT**

##### **Assessment**

*There can be no doubt as to the importance of this locality in terms of landscape, historic and cultural interest, and of the international significance of Scott's Abbotsford estate as a tourist destination. It has the potential to make a much greater contribution to the Borders tourist economy.*

*The critical issue on which nearly all the submissions and debate have focussed is whether the proposed use of the Netherbarns site for housing development would be likely to have an adverse effect on the landscape setting of the house and the wider designed landscape, which would in turn have a negative effect on the enjoyment and interest of the area for those who visit it, which in turn could undermine the success of the estate as a major tourist destination attracting visitors, and their contribution to the local economy.*

*The site is well screened in summer in views from Abbotsford House and the river bank, but is visible from the higher parts of the Abbotsford Estate land. Any new development would be visible in winter, viewed through the tree screen when it is not in leaf. I agree that the urban features of the development – buildings; vehicles; and street lighting columns – would be much more noticeable than the existing green field.*

*I also note the concerns about the continuing future effectiveness of the tree screen, particularly the large and mature beech trees along the river bank. It is agreed that many of these are of a considerable age, dating from Scott's time or a little later. Their ageing state, limited remaining lifespan, risk of removal on safety grounds, and the slow and difficult process of gradually renewing and maintaining the tree belt to provide an effective screen was not disputed at the hearing.*

*I therefore agree with objectors that the major tree belt along the river cannot be relied upon to provide an effective screen, either at present (in winter conditions and from higher elevations) or in the future (at all times and from lower as well as higher elevations). I also*

*accept that this is a particularly sensitive landscape, where even a very minor intrusion of alien elements is likely to mar the perceived experience of visitors, many of whom will have travelled a great distance to visit Abbotsford, with correspondingly high expectations.*

*I accept that there are already some unfortunate intrusions in some of the views. However I agree with the expert objectors who consider that the quality of the landscape is still worth protecting, but is at a tipping point when any further encroachment will cause significant harm. In this regard, I agree that it would be very undesirable for the Galashiels urban area to extend any further to the south along the Tweed valley, and that to release the Netherbarns site would set a very strong precedent for development of the next field to the south, which exhibits very similar characteristics, and has a similar relationship with the designed landscape.*

*Some supporters of development at Netherbarns may regard the proposal as justified because of the need to meet the structure plan housing requirement. However other housing sites have been put forward through objections to the local plan, and the Council has already started a review to meet future housing needs. Even if there were to be a predicted shortfall in this local plan, the 70 units at this site would make only a limited and short term contribution to meeting the need. In contrast, the recognised local, national, and international assets of this locality are part of the long term heritage of the area, deserving long term protection and the benefit of the precautionary principle if there is any risk or doubt about their future safeguarding.*

### **Conclusions**

*Development of the site would be undesirable because of the potential risk of damage to very important landscape, historic, and cultural interests, and to the contribution of tourism to the Borders economy.*

*Reporters: R M Hickman CBE MA BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI R Bowden BSc (Hons) MPhil MRTPI*

*Scottish Borders Local Plan Inquiry held between 4 September 2006 and 18 January 2007*

### **BROOMILEES**

I do not accept that there is any potential for mixed use (or other employment use) development on the Broomilees site. I therefore object to its mention, and ask that it be removed from the proposed plan.

Below is an extract from the report on the 2006 / 2007 Local Plan Inquiry in relation to Broomilees. Although this was written a while ago the concerns expressed about landscape, settlement coalescence etc. are exactly the same today (if not more important) as they were then, and I ask that they be carefully reconsidered.

Sometimes objectors are told not to worry, because all will be properly reconsidered in due course, but I do worry, because these (principally landscape) matters have already been considered in great detail at public enquiry, and none of the substantive points has changed. If anything planning policy has moved to a more protective stance in relation to landscape.

## EXTRACT

### **Conclusions**

*Although objectors have many subsidiary concerns, some of which (such as road access) can be mitigated or remedied, the main thrust of the vast majority of these objections is to the development of this large greenfield site due to its conspicuous and sensitive location.*

*At present, those passing back and forth along the A 6091 will be well aware of blocks of urban development on the north side of the road, as there are views of the main part of Melrose, Darnick, and (to a much lesser extent) Tweedbank. The south side of the road has a predominantly rural character, with the Dingleton Road section of Melrose largely hidden by the topography, and the BGH forming a fairly compact development sitting in a low-lying position below road level and fairly well screened by trees. The road thus has a very pleasant rural aspect to the south, passing along the northern flank of the Eildons, farmland at Harleyburn and Broomilees, and then further rural land to the west as far as the Tweed bridge at Kingsknowe and the entry to Galashiels.*

*If the proposed business park proceeds on the lines intended, it would have a high profile entry point in full view of westbound traffic passing through the new roundabout, probably giving views up the new access road into the site to the business units beyond. It would be evident that there was a major urban development occupying an extensive area, and that the main road had ceased to be a bypass but a road through a predominantly urban area.*

*Those using the local road passing the site to enter the rural area to the west would pass along the southeastern perimeter of the business park for a distance of about 800m. Although there would be some screening in this area, it is relatively low-lying. Those passing will be well aware that this is a business park (having seen the entry feature at the roundabout) and will probably have views of some of the buildings, lighting columns, etc. As most of these trips along the road will be for recreational purposes, many of them on foot, bicycle, or horse, I agree with objectors that their enjoyment of their visit is likely to be greatly diminished.*

*I note that the boundary of the designed landscape, as extended in 2004, abuts this perimeter of the business park site, and that once past the site, the roadway passes along the northern boundary, and then enters the main section of the designed landscape. Historic Scotland regards the business park proposal as regrettable, but is satisfied that it would not affect the character or integrity of the estate. Although not evident to those passing by on the main road, the major part of Scott's estate, extending to about 4 square kilometres, forms a quiet undulating area of fields, woodlands, and lochans with an almost totally unspoiled rural character derived from the 19th century plantings and subsequent rural management. Recognised and recommended walking routes pass through the area, which is also accessible to car borne visitors using the network of local access roads. I agree with Save Scott's Countryside, the Abbotsford Trustees, and others that this is a very important part of the historical and landscape heritage of the Borders, deserving protection and promotion as a complement to Abbotsford House itself, with the potential to contribute much more to tourism. I agree that this asset and future potential would be seriously damaged if the entry point is dominated by an extensive business development.*

*Turning to the wider landscape impact, I agree that the new development would be reasonably unobtrusive in most views from Darnick and further west on the A 6091, due to the topography. The viewpoints that appear to be most important, and which are brought up time and again in the objections, are those from the upper parts of the Eildon Hills.*



*Extensive photographic evidence has been provided, and I have visited the two main summits.*

*In normal conditions, the panoramic view from the Eildons takes in a wide rural area. Looking to the northwest, a partially developed corridor of settlements extends into the distance, with the Dingleton area of Melrose at the foot of the hill; the BGH fairly unobtrusive in its hollow; and the subdued and compact settlement of Darnick, flanked to the east and west by green areas, the latter being the Broomilees site. Beyond this, the various sheds on the Tweedbank Industrial estate are readily visible, beyond which Langlee, Netherdale, and Galashiels form a visually continuous urban area within the valley of the Gala Water.*

*The overall impression of the near and middle distance elements of this view is an essentially green landscape punctuated by a series of fairly compact and separate urban components (Dingleton, the BGH, Darnick, and Tweedbank). The development of the proposed business park would fill a very large green section of this tract, comparable in area to the whole of the BGH site, or Darnick, or the Tweedbank Industrial Estate. However it would be likely to be much more conspicuous than any of these, as the general aspect of the site is sloping gently down to the east, exposing it to view from the southeast; and because many of the buildings (and also the extensive parking areas on the site) would be large and easily identifiable individual elements, comparable to some of the buildings on the Tweedbank Industrial estate, but rather nearer to the viewpoint.*

*The overall effect of this additional component, which would closely abut the BGH and Darnick, and which would occupy (physically and visually) most of the green space between the BGH and Tweedbank, would be the visual coalescence of all of these elements into a single corridor of virtually continuous urban development from the BGH westwards to Galashiels. I consider that this cumulative effect would tip the balance from what is at present an acceptable combination of countryside and discrete built elements to a nearly continuous urban tract along this part of the Tweed valley. I agree with SNH and many others that this would detract significantly from the character of the national scenic area, and from the quality of the experience of those visiting the hills for recreational purposes.*

*I note that the local plan (policy EP 3) seeks to preserve the green area between Darnick and Melrose, to prevent coalescence of the settlements, and that the Council intends to consider other areas as potential candidates for similar treatment. In the light of the above conclusions, I further find that the extensive proposed development at Broomilees, leading effectively to the coalescence of Darnick, the business park, and the BGH, would run counter to the objective of policy EP 3; and that the Broomilees area may well be a suitable candidate for similar treatment.*

*I conclude that the combination of these negative landscape effects on the setting of the NSA and the designed landscape, on the setting of Darnick, and the cumulative coalescence of the general area would be very undesirable. Given the scale and nature of the proposed development, I do not think that these problems can be overcome or sufficiently mitigated through a good development brief and careful design. As the Eildon Hills and the Abbotsford Estate are major visitor destinations at the heart of the Borders, with a linking network of minor roads and footpaths attractive for recreational use, I consider that the negative effects on the quality of the visitor experience likely to result from the Broomilees development would undermine efforts to promote the contribution of tourism to the local economy.*



*The Council will be well aware of these various concerns. It has the very difficult task of balancing the conflicting priorities of economic and housing development; tourism; and the quality of life of those who live and/or work in the Borders, and those who visit the area, as well as maintaining the rich heritage of the Borders for future generations.*

*The principal justification for proposing this site for a new business park is the desire to ensure that the Central Borders can offer a high amenity location for class 4 uses. This general objective is not disputed by most objectors. However I note that the structure plan requirement set out in Policy E 15 (page 47) is not location specific, other than expressing a preference for locations in the Primary Hub, which embraces a very extensive area.*

*The evidence presented in support of the business park indicates that the probable take up of floorspace for class 4 (office) uses in the Central Borders is likely to be modest (well under half a hectare a year on average). This requirement applies to the whole of the Central Borders. It is accepted that the gradual development of the Broomilees site would take many years to complete, perhaps about 20-25 years. I consider that this would be an excessively long period of development, reflecting the very modest annual requirement, and also the possibility that some of the new office floorspace may be accommodated elsewhere in the primary hub. Once the initial site infrastructure is in place, such a slow rate of development would make it very difficult to resist pressure to accommodate some of the other employment uses listed in policy H3, especially those with large land requirements such as car dealerships and sales which would probably find this prestige location very attractive.*

*Instead, I agree with objectors that it would be greatly preferable to seek to provide a limited number of much smaller high amenity sites elsewhere for business uses. The evidence from elsewhere shows that successful business parks do not have to be large, provided that the ambience is right and that units of a suitable size are on offer. They can apparently co-exist with industrial uses, provided that the two elements are functionally and visually segregated. I agree that such an approach should make it easier to find suitable locations, and would spread the benefits of the business uses into more than one area, avoiding the problems that excessive concentration can bring in terms of traffic, house building, and the cumulative effect of development.*

*In this regard, I note that the major expansion proposed in the Newtown St Boswells – Charlesfield area may offer the opportunity for an element of business use (for example near the new garden centre), as would the proposed relocation of the Newtown mart to the east of the A68 (either as part of the new mart development or on the vacated mart site). In addition, if the mart is relocated to the east side of the A68 and one or more roundabouts are to be provided on the A68 to serve the new mart site and/or the expansion area to the south, the area to the west of Tweed Horizons could provide a suitable site for a compact business development, with excellent access and a high profile position close to the trunk road, and reflecting the attractive courtyard style of buildings already in place. The evidence indicates that this was a candidate site that was considered at an earlier stage of the selection process, and I note that another objection to the local plan (reported in the chapter on the expansion of Newtown St Boswells) seeks the allocation of this land for development. Additional employment here would be conveniently close to the major residential expansion that is proposed (see chapter 3), thus reducing the need for travel to jobs elsewhere.*

*For all these reasons, I conclude that the case made out in support of providing a major business park at Broomilees is insufficient to justify the acceptance of the very serious*

*negative environmental effects that would be likely to result. While it may be attractive to seek to improve the access to the hospital as a planning gain derived from the business park development, I consider that this too is an insufficient reason to justify the development.*

**Recommendation**

*Delete all references to the Broomilees employment site from the local plan, explaining that further steps will be taken to meet the requirements of structure plan policy E 15 for business park developments elsewhere in the Central Borders area.*

*Reporters: R M Hickman CBE MA BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI R Bowden BSc (Hons) MPhil MRTPI*

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There are two further things about Broomilees to consider.

There is an assumption that it would be good to have business and industrial land available close to the railway, but this has not been justified, especially in relation to what good may come of it for the Borders. Who will actually use the railway in relation to an industrial site? People who work there? Apart from possibly a couple of Stow residents this would mean residents of Midlothian and Edinburgh. Has any analysis been done of this? I have seen no evidence supporting the view that economic development on land near this railhead would be of particular benefit to the Borders. The common pattern of trains linking places of work to large centres of population does not apply here, except in the “live in Edinburgh / work in the Borders” sense. Being blunt, is damaging the Borders in order to provide work opportunities for people who live in Edinburgh really what we should be doing? Furthermore, the bulk of traffic related to Broomilees would be by road, to the detriment of what is already the most crowded and congested part of the Borders.

Secondly, and this is also clearly expressed in the reporters’ findings above, it does not benefit the wider Borders to have such a concentration of economic activity in the Gala / Melrose area. The benefits of economic development need to be spread, and arguably there are places in the Borders which would benefit significantly more than the Gala / Melrose area would. Other sites are already being promoted by SBC, and beyond these there is no shortage of land in the Borders adjacent to good roads.

I should have begun this latter by saying that nearly all of the proposed plan is “good stuff”, and it is good to know that so much hard work is going into making the Borders a better place. Thank you.

This comes with my good wishes and (mostly!) happy memories of time at SBC,

## Johnston, Charles

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**From:** Nicholas Watson [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 04 March 2014 18:33  
**To:** Johnston, Charles  
**Subject:** Watson Photo from top of Eildons

Charles,

This is one of the pictures which goes with my letter. Taken in about 2005

NB the Broomilees site.

Netherbarns is just visible too - you can see how substantial tree planting there would reduce the linear impact of Netherbank.

It would already be interesting to compare this with a photo taken now.

Kind regards,  
Nicholas

