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Planning Application at Alwinton Reference:- 21 NP0016

We were shocked and appalled at news of the proposed development to this much loved and appreciated gateway to the true Upper Coquetdale and wish to object to this proposal. We kindly request you take the following observations into consideration when deciding the outcome of this application.

There is no need. There are by our count, currently 21 dwellings in Alwinton plus a pub and farm which are both permanently occupied. Of the 21 dwellings 2 are second homes and 4 are holiday lets, therefore about 30% of the existing properties are not occupied on a permanent basis. Most of these properties could be described as affordable. The proposal is to build 4 more dwellings which would add about 20% to the village housing stock that are certainly not in the affordable category for local people (which is contrary to your Northumberland National Park Local Plan ((NNPLP)) para. 3.2, Strategic Priority 4, paras. 5.4.3, 5.5.1, and 6.3.2). We accept there is a demand for this type of property (NNPLP para. 5.5.2), but not by local people who cannot currently out compete the second home owners and investors for any properties that currently become available (NNPLP para.6.3.4 and Policy DM3: 2 a & b, and 3). The need is for reasonably priced houses to rent on long term tenancies, social housing managed by a housing association or similar would be of greater benefit to the areas long term sustainability as a place to live and work (NNPLP paras. 2.7, 2.10, 3.9 Strategic Policy 1 & 3, 5.5.1, 5.5.5, 6.2.4, 6.2.5, 6.3.1 and 6.3.2). Also we presume that any properties built will become principal residence (NNPLP paras 5.4.3 and 5.5.13), rather than to be bought as second homes or to be let as holiday accommodation.

Planning statement observations. The developer to our recollection lived in Alwinton from about 1992 not 1972 as stated (when he got the last council house), I have lived in the area for my entire 60 plus years.

Contrary to the applicant we believe the natural beauty of the village, hence the National Park, will be compromised by this proposal (NNPLP para. 2.14, 3.7 – Aims 1 &2). This site is highly visible from footpaths and open access land, as well as both road accesses to the village and as such any development would have to be low key to blend in (NNPLP para. 5.5.6). In our opinion the 4 houses are going to be a carbuncle on the village vista from all directions because they will be so dominant and out of character. The view from the Netherton approach which is probably the most photographed view of Alwinton and used in National Park media, will be irrevocably transformed for the worse (NNPLP 6.11.1). The views from the surrounding hills will be seriously compromised (contrary to NNPLP para 2.19, and Policy DM11: 1, & 5a), especially from The Swire path with its much appreciated view of Alwinton, and now used more than ever as part of the loop path from Harbottle car park.

We do not understand why a house 3 properties away from the site is used to determine the building line while ignoring the 2 adjacent properties, which I would have thought were more relevant for the continuity of any new development. This would result in parking behind or to the side of the properties and be in keeping with the rest of the village. This has occurred in other recent builds, for example, the 2 adjacent properties and the 2 opposite the Rose and Thistle pub, reducing the suburbia feel of front of house parking. Alwinton in general has all the development close to the roadside in many cases the property is the road edge, this although not unique is part of the character of Alwinton and should be preserved.

If as stated this is indeed the last piece of land within the village suitable for development presumably because there are dwellings on the other side of the road. The land to the South West and South East of Harbottle is very similar and would be liable for development too if this were the case, these are extending the village, not infill which requires a gap between properties. The open spaces within these small villages are what gives them their character and appeal, especially to visitors who have commented to us on the view from the car park across the area of proposed development. This openness once lost will never be recovered. Any development in Alwinton should blend in and be unobtrusive. The land to the North of the road from the farm cottages to the farm should be considered for any development first, being behind and obscured by existing properties, causing least damage to the landscape. The plot furthest west is beyond the farm cottages opposite and would therefore extend the village.

Not appropriate development for this site. These are obviously not affordable homes for the local population, this is a luxury development by any measure which as you state (NNPLP para. 6.2.1), is already higher than average in the Park, therefore we currently need no more. A development of this type will only exacerbate the imbalance. The houses are more suited to the urban fringe of Newcastle or Morpeth where they are usually hidden in woodland. Rothbury has several plots under construction of this category of house and would be the closest most appropriate location. From our personal observations the houses of this type in Rothbury tend to be purchased by incoming retirees or as investments, then possibly rented out. The sheer scale of the houses are not in keeping with anything nearby, for example, the proposed house opposite the farm cottages is about twice the size of all 3 cottages combined. This is the type of property seen in American soap operas or used by Mexican drug lords, not in an exposed site in the National Park, where it is going to be highly visible from a mile away on the village approach as well as in the village itself.

The site (NNPLP Policy DM3: 3.) is obviously capable of catering for more than 5 houses, probably 10 if you compare the site to the dwellings on the other side of the road and add in 3 for the car park gap. This should therefore trigger the need for half the site to be affordable homes, and made mandatory in any development approved according to Policy DM3.

There is mention the developer is willing to enter a S106 agreement, this we assume is to build affordable housing as mitigation, either on (amend plans) or off site. To approve this proposal as it stands rather than affordable homes, either to buy or rent, would be against current National Park policy and an affront to all who grew up in the National Park and had to leave because of housing costs, and to all its visitors who love the park how it is without inappropriately sized houses.

Yours faithfully

