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Planning & Design





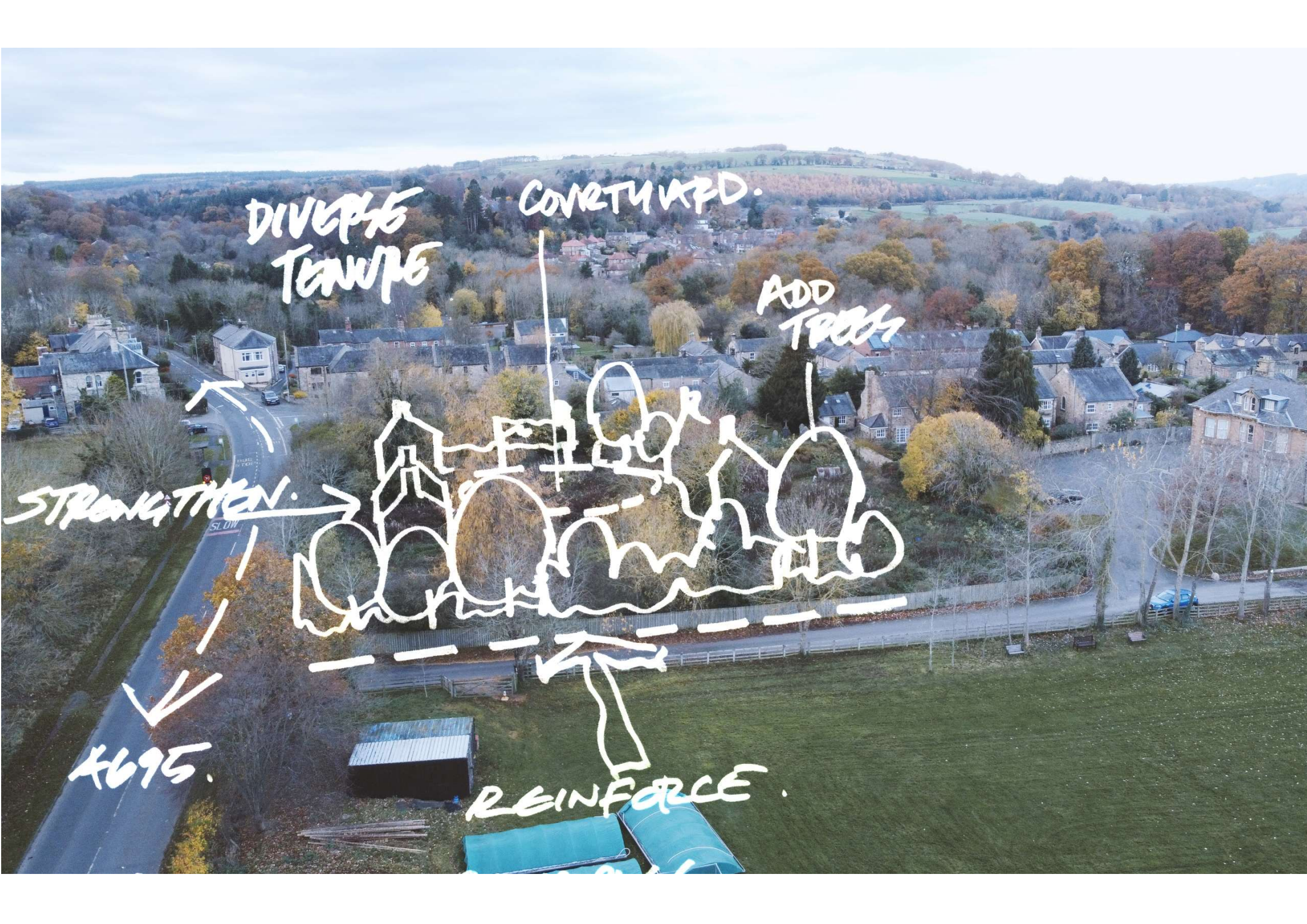
Introduction

These representations have been prepared by BH Planning & Design on behalf of Mr & Mrs Wallis and Mr & Mrs Dixon in response to ongoing public consultation as part of the preparation of the Broomhaugh and Riding Neighbourhood Plan.

The landowners strongly support the intentions of the Neighbourhood Plan in proposing to allocate sites for future housing development as a direct response to the specific housing needs of the Parish identified in the recent Housing Needs Assessment. This is essential in the context of an emerging Northumberland Local Plan which has defined Riding Mill and Broomhaugh as a service village but has not identified a need to provide any additional land for housing development over and above existing planning consents.

The Neighbourhood Plan provides an opportunity to effectively bridge that gap through the allocation of land for future housing development that would meet the specific needs of the Parish which, otherwise, could not be met under the provisions of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan due to the constraints imposed on the settlement by the Green Belt.

In this context, the purpose of these representations from the landowners relates to the recent Search for Housing Sites call and they are intended to express support for potential residential development land to the east of Ford Terrace at Riding Mill. The site's location is shown in red on the previous aerial image. Concept drawings included in this document show how the site is capable of delivering up to 15 dwellings to meet the housing needs of the Parish whilst being an inherently sustainable location close to local services, facilities, strategic road infrastructure and excellent public transport links. Furthermore, the concept drawings provided show how a residential development on this site would be proportionate in scale to the village and sensitive to its intrinsic character, appearance and setting.



DIVERGE
TENURE

CONVERTED.

ADD
TREES

STRENGTHEN.

A695.

REINFORCE.

The Site and Surroundings

Riding Mill is defined as a service village in the emerging Northumberland Local Plan and is located just 5 miles east of the main town of Hexham. It is an attractive place to live due to its excellent public transport links which include regular train services from Riding Mill Station travelling between Hexham and Newcastle upon Tyne where there are wide ranging services, facilities and employment opportunities available. The village is also on a frequent bus route along the A695.

Its inherently sustainable location combined with easy access to the surrounding countryside, open spaces and rural atmosphere make Riding Mill a sought after and popular place to live. It is acknowledged by the Parish Council however that the village has an ageing population and also that younger people struggle to buy homes in Riding Mill due to the high costs of existing housing stock.

The Parish Council have expressed their desire to achieve a more balanced demographic and this appears to be mirrored by local residents with the recent village survey identifying that most respondents were in favour of most types of new housing, albeit the majority were opposed to the building of larger detached homes. Comments included a desire for housing specifically designed for older residents and a desire for houses that will attract families with young children. An increase in the number of one and two bedroom properties was also specifically identified to help provide alternatives for younger people without children and older residents wishing to downsize.

The potential development site to the east of Ford Terrace is located at the eastern entrance into the village on the northern side of the A695. The site is bounded to the west by existing dwellings on Ford Terrace and Riding Mill Methodist Church; to the north by dwellings located on Mill Grange and Broomhaugh House which is a substantial detached building; to the east by an access lane serving Broomhaugh House & Riding Mill Cricket Club; and to the south by the A695. As the site is surrounded on two sides by existing built development and on its third side by the Cricket Club, it is clearly recognisable as an infill plot within the village. It is also located within the village name signs and within the 30mph speed limit thus sitting well within the extent of the settlement.

Conceptual drawings have been prepared which demonstrate how up to 15 dwellings of a modest scale could be developed on the site to meet the specific housing needs of the Parish whilst achieving a sensitive, high quality development and living environment for future occupiers. The concept layout is entirely indicative at this time but it is envisaged that development on the site would pick up design cues and reflect character within the surrounding area whilst avoiding replication of the design and appearance of the surrounding buildings and properties. Rather, it is considered that modern design and materials may be appropriate in this location.

CONCEPT PLAN.

THREE NON
TREES PLANTED
PER PLOT.



National Planning Policy Context and Neighbourhood Planning

The most recent version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in July 2021 makes clear at paragraph 11 that a presumption in favour of sustainable development should be applied by plan-makers to *“positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change.”*

The delivery of new housing is a key focus of the NPPF with the Government intent on significantly boosting the supply of new homes. To achieve this objective, paragraph 60 recognises the importance of ensuring that a sufficient amount and variety of land comes forward where it is needed and that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed. Within this context, paragraph 62 of the Framework recognises that the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies.

It is not a case of delivering housing at any cost however and a strong emphasis is placed on design quality in the NPPF with paragraph 126 making clear that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is identified as a key aspect of sustainable development, creating better places in which to live and work and helping to make development acceptable to local communities.

Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area and it is the case that Neighbourhood Plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Paragraph 29 of the NPPF makes clear however that Neighbourhood Plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area or undermine those strategic policies.

In this context, and as set out earlier in this document, the landowners are fully supportive of the Neighbourhood Plan's intention to allocate sites for future housing development as a direct response to the specific housing needs of the Parish identified in the recent Housing Needs Assessment, especially when the emerging Northumberland Local Plan will not provide for any additional land for housing development over and above existing planning consents and with the settlement otherwise being tightly constrained by the Green Belt.

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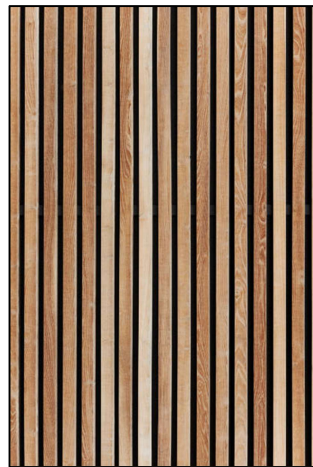


- 01 Dry stone walls
- 02 Hedgerow boundary
- 03 Natural slate roof tiles
- 04 Natural sandstone
- 05 Wildflower planting
- 06 Timber cladding

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Green Belt Analysis

It is acknowledged that the site currently lies within the Green Belt. However, paragraphs 136 and 140 of the NPPF make provision for Neighbourhood Plan's to amend Green Belt boundaries.

The NPPF is instructive at paragraph 136 that, when reviewing Green Belt boundaries, plan-makers should have regard to their intended permanence in the long term so that they are capable of enduring beyond the Plan period. Paragraph 138 further states that when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should be taken into account.

In supporting the land east of Ford Terrace at Riding Mill for future housing development, the landowners recognise the importance of first understanding the role that the site performs in Green Belt terms. Whilst the Council's Green Belt Review (2015) and Green Belt Review Addendum (2018) provide a useful starting point in this regard, they only assess the contribution that a much wider general area makes to the Green Belt in this location and therefore a more specific site analysis is provided below against the five purposes of Green Belt.

Purpose 1 - To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

The proposed development site comprises an area of land situated towards the eastern edge of the main developed part of Riding Mill and Broomhaugh. It sits between the rear of dwellings on Ford Terrace and the access lane to Broomhaugh House and Riding Mill Cricket Club, as well as built development at Broomhaugh House, in effect forming a gap site in an otherwise built-up area.

The site is entirely contained by existing development to the north and west, an access road to the east and the A695 to the south. It is therefore representative of a natural infill site that would in effect round off development in this part of the village and result in no adverse harm to the first purpose of the Green Belt. The site could not extend or sprawl any further eastwards due to the existing access road whilst to the north and west the site is constrained by existing development.

Purpose 2 - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

The proposed development of the site would not lead to the merging of Riding Mill and Broomhaugh with any other settlements and the characteristics of the site surroundings, as explained above, are such that the land is entirely contained by existing built development to the north and west, by an access road to the east, and the A695 to the south. The site represents the logical infilling of a gap within an otherwise built-up area and would not result in the settlement being any closer to Stocksfield which is the closest neighbouring settlement to the east thus complying with the second purpose of the Green Belt.



Green Belt Analysis Continued

Purpose 3 - To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

It is clear that an informal boundary of Riding Mill and Broomhaugh is formed by the access lane to Broomhaugh House and Riding Mill Cricket Club which bounds the eastern part of the site. As the site is well contained by the access lane, its development for residential purposes would not result in any encroachment into the surrounding countryside which would be entirely protected. Rather, the development would constitute a form of infill development and therefore not undermine the third purpose of the Green Belt.

Purpose 4 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

The Green Belt around Riding Mill performs well in terms of preserving the setting and character of this traditional Northumbrian village. It is important to highlight however that the village does not feature a Conservation Area and, in any event, a modest development in this edge-of-settlement location would have no adverse impact on its character, appearance or setting or the continued role that the remaining Green Belt would perform in protecting these interests under the fourth purpose.

Purpose 5 - To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict/urban land

It has been acknowledged by the Parish Council and local community that the village can support an element of housing growth over the period of the Neighbourhood Plan and that a small number of new homes to meet an identified local housing need would likely compliment the type of housing currently available in the settlement. There are no vacant or derelict sites in need of regeneration that could be affected by the release of this site from the Green Belt and its potential allocation for housing would not preclude other brownfield land from coming forward for development.

The analysis above supports the proposition that the necessary justification exists for the removal of the site from the Green Belt. The site performs only a very minor role in Green Belt terms when assessed against the five purposes of Green Belt as set out in paragraph 138 of the NPPF and it could accommodate development without adversely impacting on or undermining the purposes of the wider Green Belt in this location. In this respect, the allocation of the site to allow it to come forward for housing purposes to meet the specific needs of the Parish would be NPPF compliant.



TO RAILWAY.

THREE NON
TREES PLANTED
PER PLOT,

REINFORCE SETTLEMENT
BOUNDARY WITH SOFT
LANDSCAPE BUFFER TO THE
EAST.

COURTYARD.

CREATE
PLAGE.

DIVERSE
TENOR
MIX.

Site Assessment

Whilst the conceptual plans submitted with these representations are only indicative proposals at this stage, they demonstrate how a modest and sympathetic development could be achieved on the site that respects the character, appearance and setting of the location and its surroundings. The effect of development on the site would be a natural and relatively contained continuation of the current built form and it would be perceived as an addition to the existing residential area through the infilling of a gap site that is otherwise bound by development, an access lane and a highway.

All of the site boundaries are identified as having strongly defined edges which would act as natural and defensible boundaries to development on the site. Due to the existing residential properties surrounding the site to the north and west, development on the site would also not be perceived in visual terms as extending the edge of the village.

The experience of those arriving into Riding Mill from the east would be largely unaltered by the proposed development until in very close proximity to the site. The northern side of the A695 leading into Riding Mill is lined with trees and this would continue along the site frontage to allow it to blend into the surroundings and soften the appearance of the development overall. The trees along the northern side of the A695 conceal views of the site on the long westwards approach into Riding Mill with views towards the site not gained until very close proximity. Even then the low density of housing being proposed, combined with the setting back of development from the road edge and the retention of roadside vegetation, would all help to reduce noticeable effects so that the proposed development would not appear incongruous.

While any proposed greenfield residential development would inevitably bring a degree of harm with direct impacts on the site itself and the wider landscape, the visual impacts in this case would be isolated due to the well contained nature of the site and the low number and density of the dwellings being proposed. The development would be seen in the context of surrounding residential development and so would not be incongruous in its setting provided the development is well designed and sensitive to its landscape context.

The site is bounded to the west by Riding Mill Methodist Church and the house which adjoins it to the south which are both Grade II listed buildings. As such, the indicative site layout has allowed for a significant separation distance between any built development on the subject site and both of the adjacent listed buildings to ensure that there would not be any impact on the setting of the listed buildings and their features of special interest.

The conceptual development option presented responds positively to the key site constraints and design opportunities and would result in a form of development that would not only preserve but also significantly enhance the character, appearance and setting of the village. There is a genuine commitment to design quality in this case and retaining the character and appearance of the area would result in the delivery of a high quality new build housing scheme on the site that would help to meet local housing need entirely in accordance with the key objectives of the NPPF.

Neighbourhood Plan Vision

The vision for the Neighbourhood Plan has been established by the Parish Council as making the most of the heritage, connectivity and rural environment by aspiring to become a more balanced, diverse and sustainable community. In the context of housing supply this means ensuring a balanced provision of new housing that reflects the demographic of Riding Mill.

Through the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council are aiming to enable people to maintain their independence and to continue to live within and participate in Riding Mill's vibrant community whilst also ensuring that an increase in the number of smaller properties is provided to help provide alternatives for younger people with and without children, and older residents wishing to downsize.

Whilst responding to the specific housing needs of the Parish, development of the subject site would also deliver significant and lasting social, economic and environment benefits to the local community which align with other objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan and can be summarised as follows:

Social Benefits

- Significant opportunity to help address the identified housing needs in Riding Mill;
- Provision of dwellings for small/single person households and provision of more affordable dwellings to allow for young people to remain living in Riding Mill; and
- More spending power in the local area to enhance the vitality and viability of local services, facilities and public transport connections.

Economic Benefits

- Employment opportunities, directly and indirectly, during the build period;
- Additional resident expenditure generated in the local economy supporting jobs in local shops and services; and
- Additional Parish Council precept receipts.

Environmental Benefits

- Enhancement of green infrastructure routes, wildlife corridors and open space;
- New high quality environment and landscape; and
- Installation of additional boundary planting to assist in the visual screening of the proposed development and the creation of a new defensible Green Belt boundary.

- 01 Yew Tree Cottage
- 02 Land West of Riding Mill Cricket Club
- 03 'Stepping Stones'
- 04 St James Terrace
- 05 View from Osbit to the site



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Conclusions

There is a clear requirement for additional housing in Riding Mill over and above that accounted for in the emerging Northumberland Local Plan which is limited to sites that already benefit from planning permission. The landowners therefore strongly support the intentions of the Neighbourhood Plan in proposing to allocate sites for future housing development as a direct response to the specific housing needs of the Parish as identified in the Housing Needs Assessment.

The aim of enabling people to maintain their independence and to continue to live within and participate in Riding Mill's vibrant community is welcomed. Ensuring that an increase in the number of smaller properties is provided to help provide alternatives for younger people with and without children, and older residents wishing to downsize, is also supported.

These representations have demonstrated that the land east of Ford Terrace in Riding Mill represents a logical and sustainable small-scale infill development opportunity which could be facilitated by a sensitive release from the Green Belt through the Neighbourhood Plan. The site is available for development and could deliver up to 15 new dwellings that would respond specifically to the local housing needs identified in the recent Housing Needs Assessment without adversely affecting the intrinsic character, appearance or setting of the village or undermining the purposes of the wider Green Belt in this location. There are also no known physical or technical constraints, or other potential impacts or environmental conditions, that would prevent development on the site from coming forward.

The landowners are committed to working with the Parish Council in allocating the site for housing to meet the needs identified by the Housing Needs Assessment and in bringing it forward for development. As preparation of the Broomhaugh and Riding Neighbourhood Plan progresses, they would be happy to continue to engage with the Parish Council and the local community to discuss the proposals in more detail.



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