

Consultation Comment on Planning Application 13/00332/FUL by Gavinton, Fogo & Polwarth Community Council

The proposed development of site BGA1 will have such a major impact on the village of Gavinton that the Community Council has undertaken wide public consultation, including the holding of a public meeting on 17th April 2013, in preparing this comment. The points listed below represent a distillation of the views expressed by residents, discussed and refined at a meeting of the Community Council on 22nd April 2013.

1. Number of Houses There is serious concern about the size of the development relative to the existing size of the village. The building of 54 houses would increase the housing stock in the village by 55%. For comparison, a proportionate expansion in the size of Galashiels would require the building of over 3,000 houses. In the Adopted Local Plan of February 2011, site BGA1 was allocated for the development of 45 houses. This had replaced on appeal the Council's original intention to allocate site BGA4B at the other side of the village for the development of 14 houses. **GFPC considers that in no circumstances should planning permission be granted for more than 45 houses on this site.**
2. Phasing In their Design and Access Statement, Section 7, the applicants indicate that the development is to be in four phases, phase one being the houses along Main Street, phase two being the houses on either side of the extension of Maitland Row and phases three and four being those houses intended to be built south of the building line of the current settlement. They indicate that the timing of each phase will depend on market conditions and is unpredictable. GFPC takes the view that, due to the long timescale likely to be involved, it is important that each phase is completed before the next is undertaken. We do not want isolated houses constructed by self builders out of sync with the rest of the development. Giving full planning permission now for the whole intended development would relinquish control over this aspect. **GFPC considers that full planning permission should be considered at this stage for phases one and two only, comprising 23 houses, and that outline planning permission should be considered for phases three and four.**
3. A6105 Junction The Transport Assessment has inadequately addressed the overall impact of the development on traffic in Gavinton. The current demographic of the village is skewed heavily towards the elderly and low car ownership households. By comparison the likely composition of households in the new development will be skewed towards families and multi car ownership. As a consequence the trips generated by the new development are likely to result in more than a doubling of traffic in the village.

No consideration has been given in the Transport Assessment to the doubling of turning traffic through the junction of A6105 and Main Street, Gavinton. Although it is accepted that this will not result in any capacity problems at the junction, the scale of the increase will undoubtedly impact on the safety of the junction. The developer has produced a possible plan for improvement of this junction which GFPC considers to be wholly inadequate. The sight lines for drivers entering the junction from the minor road are currently woefully inadequate in terms of the visibility standards set out in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges. The developer's proposal to move the junction slightly westward (see Drg.No.TP018/SK/003 and 004) and to require the owner of the Auld Kirk to remove vegetation on the north side of his property improves them, but still does not meet the DMRB requirement for length of sight line in respect of the speed of vehicles approaching on the main road (at the 85th percentile) as determined by the developer's own research.

The clear disadvantage of moving the junction slightly westward as in Drg.No.TP018/SK/003 and 004, relates to the geometric alignment of the junction. In the past Main Street Gavinton was aligned with the A6105 and created danger as a result of drivers from Main Street to the A6105 (and those travelling in the reverse direction) deliberately or otherwise passing through the junction at speed. At some point the junction was redesigned to realign Main Street to increase the awareness of the priority junction with the A6105 (see Drg.No.TP018/SK/002). This redesign also

resulted in reducing the speed of right turning traffic from A6105 into Gavinton. The new proposals in the Transport Assessment, by moving the junction west reduce the deflection angle and thus increase the likelihood of accidents.

A situation not addressed in the developer's Transport Assessment is that of vehicles approaching on the A6105 from the west and attempting to turn right into Gavinton. If such a vehicle is delayed by oncoming traffic it becomes a potentially unseen hazard to subsequent vehicles descending the long Choicelee straight and entering the bend just prior to the junction. No consideration has been given to the "safe stopping distance" related to traffic approaching the junction of A6105 and Main Street from the west. The forward visibility on the A6105 from Greenlaw, as it approaches Gavinton, is restricted and a serious cause for concern. There will undoubtedly be increased accident potential as a result of a doubling of right turning traffic from A6105 into Gavinton, which has not been addressed in the Transport Assessment. The Transport Assessment refers to TD 42/95 when discussing visibility standards. TD 42/95 also states that "*Ghost islands shall be used on new single carriageway roads, or in the upgrading of existing junctions, to provide right turning vehicles with a degree of shelter from the through flow. They are highly effective in improving safety, and are relatively cheap, especially on wide 2-lane single carriageway roads where very little extra construction cost is involved.*"

GFPC considers that more substantial improvements to the A6105 junction than those outlined by the developer are required and that the implementation of these improvements, with such developer contribution as the Council may determine in terms of the agreed Planning Brief, must be a precondition to the granting of full planning permission. Specifically we consider that adequate protection for traffic turning right from the A6105 into Gavinton must be provided and that the sight lines for vehicles turning right from the minor road onto the A6105 must be brought up to DMRB standards. We also consider that junction improvement works should precede the start of construction in order to allow safe access for traffic during construction.

4. Waterlogging and drainage The southern end of the site is extremely poorly drained, apparently in part due to the root system of the ornamental hedge (*x cuprocypris leylandii*) around the adjacent Langton Recreation Ground impeding the drainage of the surrounding agricultural land. The main problem is the limited fall between the site and the junction of the outflow with the Howe Burn (approx. 20m in 3km). The run-off from the site, though ameliorated by the proposed SuDs and other measures outlined in the application, is likely to be more, and certainly no less, than that of the undeveloped site. **GFPC considers that remedial works to the drainage system should be undertaken by the developer prior to any development and that this should be made a precondition of the granting of planning permission.**
5. Access to Public Transport The applicant describes the Red Brae footpath as 'level'. It is anything but, having a 14% slope. This is far too steep for all but the able-bodied to climb with any load at all. The answer to this would be the creation of a bus turning point adjacent to the northeast corner of the site so that the service 60 bus could come into the village for at least some of its journeys. **GFPC considers that, as part of its off-site transport works in terms of the Planning Brief, the developer should contribute to a bus turning facility at the Main Street / Fogo Road junction.**
6. Parking for Footballers Duns AFC use the Langton Recreation Ground adjacent to the site for their football practice and matches. At times up to 60, and commonly 15, cars are parked on the road approaching the site from the west. The plans show the removal of the existing lay-by used by the footballers. If this happens, the creation of alternative parking is essential. **GFPC considers that, as part of its off-site transport works in terms of the Planning Brief, the developer must ensure that the parking available to users of the Langton Recreation Ground is not reduced and is, if possible, enhanced.**
7. Village Amenities An increase of this magnitude in the population of the village will put strain on existing village amenities, the village hall and the play area on the green. In the original proposal to develop the site the developer indicated that he would be willing

to contribute to the building of a new village hall. This is not required as the existing hall has been refurbished but is currently in process of having further facilities created for the benefit of villagers. **GFPC considers that a substantial, but reasonable, developer contribution to the further enhancement of existing village amenities to serve the increased population that would result from this development should be a condition for the granting of planning permission.**

8. Utilities Residents are concerned that the supply of water, electricity, gas, telephone and broadband may be severely overstretched by the massive increase in demand that would result from the building of this development. GFPC notes that, in its comment, Scottish Water states that "*Rawburn Water Treatment Works may have capacity to service this proposed development. The water network that serves the proposed development may be able to supply the new demand.*" This level of assurance is not adequate. **GFPC considers that the provision of guaranteed assurances from all relevant suppliers that they will be able to cope with the increased demand for utilities that would result from this development without detriment to the service provided to existing users must be a precondition to the granting of planning permission**
9. Sewerage The developer's plans envisage the installation of a sewage pumping station at the southeast corner of the site to pump the sewage up to a point at the corner of Fogo Road and Maitland Row where it can enter the existing sewerage. There is no indication as to who will be responsible for the maintenance and running of this pumping facility after the completion of the development. Scottish Water have commented that "*Duns Waste Water Treatment Works may have capacity to service this proposed development. The waste water network that serves the proposed development may be able to accommodate the new demand. Our initial investigations have highlighted their[sic] may be a requirement for the Developer to carry out works on the local network to ensure there is no loss of service to existing customers. The Developer should discuss the implications directly with Scottish Water.*" This does not provide the level of assurance that satisfies existing residents, particularly in view of previous problems that have occurred with sewage back-up and overflow in the village. Residents are seeking cast-iron guarantees that the new development will not be allowed to have an adverse effect on the service provided to existing residents. **GFPC considers that (a) the establishment of arrangements for the long-term maintenance and running of the sewage pumping facility and (b) the completion of such works as are required to enhance the existing sewerage system to enable it to cope with the increased flow that would result from this development without adversely affecting the service provided to existing residents must both be preconditions to the granting of planning permission.**
10. Roadside Amenity In its response to the draft planning brief (letter 2 June 2009), GFPC expressed the view that the footpaths on the northern and eastern frontages of the site should be in-site rather than at the edge of the existing road, in order to protect the amenity of roadside verges which are heavily planted with daffodils as a result of grant-aided planting by GFPC some ten years ago. The present plan envisages pavements next to the road on both these frontages. **GFPC considers that the developer must fund the restitution of daffodil planting to offset any loss of amenity caused by the proposed siting of these footpaths.**
11. Traffic Volumes There is concern among residents about the effect of increased traffic volumes within the village, both on main street, which takes both through and local traffic, and at the Fogo Road / Maitland Row junction where turning traffic will impact on adjacent properties. The developer's Transport Assessment does not address the question of traffic volumes and no research appears to have been done on present volumes and the likely impact of the proposed development. Our prediction (see point 3 above) is that traffic volumes would double if the proposed development were to be completed. Traffic calming measures and good road design would help to ameliorate these effects. **GFPC considers that the developer must be required to contribute to off-site traffic calming and road design measures to mitigate the effects of the increased traffic that would result from this development.**

12. House Design It is noted that the developer has taken great care to incorporate a variety of house designs that reflect the architectural character and range of buildings in the existing village. This care is appreciated by residents who consider that the visual quality of the new development is very important for the preservation of their amenity. It is therefore a concern that there are no plans shown in the application for the 'affordable' houses identified as types J, K & L. **GFPCC considers that plans for house types J, K & L must be made available for scrutiny before the determination of this application.**
13. Affordable Housing The current plan proposes that the affordable housing should all be clustered round the Courtyard with its own entrance to Fogo Road. One of the benefits of Gavinton is a thorough mixture of house types and sizes. **GFPCC considers that the distribution of affordable housing throughout the development would result in a more inclusive feel to the community.**



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23rd April 2013