

Mike Dando
Community Planner
Yorkshire Planning Aid
Advisor to Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan

20th January 2015

Dear Mr Dando,

**OXSPRING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – OXSPRING FIELDS DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS -
WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO DO DELIVER THE VILLAGE'S NEEDS & ASPIRATIONS**

We write on behalf of Yorkshire Land Ltd with an offer to commence constructive discussions with yourself and the Oxspring Neighbourhood Development Plan group with regard to the sustainable growth of the Village.

Introduction

In the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan partnership working between those preparing the document, local stakeholders and developers is strongly encouraged.

Yorkshire Land Ltd (YLL) is a small privately owned family business that has successfully developed land around the Oxspring, Penistone and Western Rural District for over 27 years. YLL have been instrumental in delivering a number of housing sites in Oxspring and the Western Rural part of the Borough, bringing tens of millions of pounds of investment to the area. Their focus has been to provide tangible benefits to enhance the local environment as part of their development schemes without the receipt of grant funding of any type.

YLL have a number of land interests within Oxspring village and are keen to work with yourself and the Oxspring Neighbourhood Development Plan Group (NDPG) to proactively consider the release of their land to enable the delivery of the variety of benefits that the Oxspring NDPG have identified as being aspirations for the Village.

We acknowledge from a review of a number of the minutes of the Oxspring NDPG (including those dated 5th September 2013) that the purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to deliver the Village's needs and long held aspirations.

We set out below how YLL's development proposals at the Oxspring Fields, Oxspring site can deliver a significant number of benefits to the Village, Penistone and the western rural area of the Borough.

Oxspring Fields Development Proposals

The Oxspring Fields proposals have the potential to accommodate approximately 150 dwellings (including 36 affordable homes) and to facilitate the delivery of the Strategic Public Transport Interchange for Penistone (including additional car parking), a Community Centre/Sports Pavilion for Oxspring and enhanced recreational facilities including a new country park. In addition, the creation of a riverside walk, providing the potential for a much desired Parish fishing club.

Below we set out how the Oxspring Fields development proposals can deliver the Village's identified needs and aspirations. Full details of the benefits that the Oxspring Fields proposals can provide are set out in more detail within the enclosed Sustainability & Accessibility Study which has been submitted to Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council in response to their consultation on the Draft Local Plan.

Meeting Housing Needs

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment identifies that there is a short fall of all property types in the Borough, but specifically in detached family house types. It concludes that future development should focus on addressing identified shortfalls to reflect household aspirations by delivering a house type mix that should take account of the identified imbalances.

The identified imbalances of the housing supply are Borough wide but they can also be clearly identified in the Penistone area. There is a need to deliver high quality family houses in the Penistone area to meet housing needs. To this regard YLL are concerned that the sites identified as draft housing allocations in the area will not meet Penistone's and the surrounding settlement's (including Oxspring's) housing needs. This is due to a number of issues associated with their deliverability as a result of a number of physical constraints including highways and landscape impact. As a result we believe that additional "*deliverable*" housing sites need to be identified.

With regard to Oxspring's housing needs, the Oxspring Housing Needs Capacity Study prepared by URS identifies the need to deliver between 53 and 68 new homes in the Village. The document identifies a need for a range of house types, including affordable housing.

The figures presented in the document were generated using an assessment of the latest population projections, alongside other factors. It is important to state here that updated projections are expected to be published in February of this year. The results of which should be used to update the URS study.

One element the study doesn't consider, given its intended purpose, is how the delivery of a maximum of 68 homes would enable the delivery of the Village's identified non-housing needs and aspirations which we consider in detail below.

The development of the Oxspring Fields site could deliver all of the Village's housing needs identified in the URS study, but through the delivery of 80 further homes (including 36 affordable homes) they could deliver a significant number of benefits with it. Benefits that no other site can deliver in isolation or together with a combination of other sites.

In order to put the delivery of the additional 80 homes into some context, though the development can be delivered over a 5 year period, when averaged out over the entire 19 year plan period the contribution of approximately 150 new homes would equate to just 8 homes per annum, of which 2.5 homes per annum would be affordable properties.

The benefits that the Oxspring development proposals would deliver to the local area are as follows:-

- Delivery of approximately 150 new homes providing a major contribution to delivering low density housing and affordable housing to meet the Village's housing needs and to help re-balance the Penistone area's and Borough's Housing Supply;
- Investment of Capital Expenditure of £18m;
- 46 direct construction jobs & 65 indirect construction jobs;
- New Homes Bonus of £1,249,248 of which the Oxspring NDPG will have a say on where this money is spent;
- £208,208 additional Council Tax receipts per annum;
- New first occupation Retail & Leisure Expenditure of £715,000 & ongoing expenditure of £2,621,438 each year by new residents;
- Provision of £1m funding and the land required to deliver a new Strategic Public Transport Interchange;

- Delivery of significant community and recreation benefits including funding towards a Community Centre/Sports Pavilion (£500k) providing such facilities as; changing rooms; toilets; meeting and function rooms; and health facilities such as a Dr's surgery;
- Provision of a new country park with the potential to provide footpaths, trim trails, picnic areas, general kick about areas and play space alongside enhancements to the tourism offer of the Trans Pennine Trail through improving accessibility and providing facilities such as a cycle hire shop, a café and other appropriate facilities; and,
- Creation of riverside walks through Oxspring Rocher, providing the potential for the formation of footpaths, picnic areas and a Parish fishing club.

The development proposals can deliver up to 150 new homes, including a viable level of affordable housing on-site, to meet the housing needs of the Village. The Oxspring NDPG have identified that there is a need to deliver new affordable homes for existing residents of the Village that cannot currently afford to buy a property. As a direct response, the Oxspring Fields proposals can deliver circa 36 new affordable homes. These homes would be delivered on site at no cost to the public purse and would in due course be transferred to a Registered Provider for management in perpetuity.

The Oxspring Neighbourhood Development Plan Group have identified the potential to deliver new homes in the Village on smaller sites rather than sites of the size of the Oxspring Fields site. Small sites, and even a collection of small sites, do not have the potential to deliver the identified level of affordable housing needed due to issues associated with viability and of course the Council's affordable housing policy, set out in Draft Policy H8 of the emerging Local Plan, which identifies that only sites of 15 or more dwellings will be required to deliver affordable homes.

The development of the Oxspring Fields site could deliver all of the Village's housing needs alongside the delivery of a significant number of benefits. Benefits that no other site can deliver in isolation or together with a combination of other sites.

Public Transport & Highways Improvements

The Oxspring Fields development site is located in a highly sustainable location given the accessibility of the site and its connectivity to a wide range of services and facilities. Of greater importance to the Oxspring NDPG though is the potential for the development to significantly enhance the public transport accessibility and connectivity of the Village and the wider Penistone area.

YLL are offering as part of their Oxspring Fields proposals, in combination with their scheme at Wellhouse Lane, Penistone (a draft housing allocation), to facilitate the delivery of a new Strategic Public Transport Interchange at Penistone Train Station. A scheme which would also include a 100 space car park, a pedestrian bridge crossing, a tourist information centre, café and toilets.

The provision of these facilities will generate major economic benefits to the area. They will deliver enhanced facilities for communities, local businesses and promote tourism in this area of the Borough. The facility will deliver a great sustainable benefit to Penistone and its environs, which include Oxspring, leading to a much improved Public Transport service, reducing congestion on the local road network and ultimately addressing significant barriers to the future growth of the area.

Moreover, the Penistone Community Led Parish Plan (2013) identifies support towards the delivery of the Strategic Public Transport Interchange and additional parking facilities. The Plan identified parking issues and bus connectivity as being a barrier towards the growth of the area's tourism industry.

Whilst the cost of delivering these facilities is substantial, YLL are committed to their delivery. The funding being offered by YLL towards the provision of the facility is £1m alongside the "gifting" of the required land (which is currently in their ownership) at nil cost, and which has a current market value of £750k. This equates to a total contribution of £1.75m.

The facilitation of the Strategic Public Transport Interchange by the development proposals will have significant environmental benefits in the form of increasing sustainable transport modes and reducing the reliance on the private car. It will also reduce congestion within the central area of Penistone.

The provision of the Strategic Public Transport Interchange would also be supported by Sheffield Council. In their response to the draft Local Plan (dated 10th December 2014) they identify that the “*City Council is supporting improvements to the highway network and public transport services within the Upper Don Valley. This includes examining the potential for reopening passenger rail services on the existing rail line between Stocksbridge and Sheffield. It would therefore be desirable to improve bus services between Penistone and Stocksbridge.*”

It is most likely that that any new bus services between Penistone and Stocksbridge would travel through Oxspring, thereby further adding to the viability and sustainability of the settlement and our proposed Oxspring Fields site. It also adds to the need to deliver the proposed Penistone Transport Interchange on land at Lairds Way, which would prevent any new bus services further congesting the centre of Penistone whilst making up waiting time at the current Bus layover.

The issue of congestion within the central area of Penistone is becoming an increasing concern to local residents, the Town Council and local Ward Members. Enclosed with this letter is a front page article from the Barnsley Chronical (Penistone Edition) dated 16th January 2015. The development of the proposed draft housing allocations in Penistone will only exacerbate the existing highways issues of the town, especially those located to the south in and around Cubley.

In addition, due to its location in respect of the strategic road network the Oxspring Fields proposals would not have an adverse impact on the existing congestion issues in Penistone and, if anything, due to YLL’s ability to facilitate the delivery of the Strategic Public Transport Interchange, they will only aid in reducing these issues.

It is again important to state that without the Oxspring Fields development proposals the delivery of the Strategic Public Transport Facility in Penistone and the benefits it will provide will not be possible.

Finally, the Oxspring Fields development proposals will also enhance foot/cycle connections to the Trans Pennine trail which will provide existing and future residents of the Village the ability to take full advantage of the myriad of walking and cycle routes that connect the Village to services and facilities available in the wider area. Including Penistone railway station which is a 7 minute commute by bicycle from the site. This point is also discussed further below.

It is our opinion that when deciding future housing allocations for the Penistone and Oxspring area, the Oxspring Fields development proposals should be set apart from other sites as a result of their potential to significantly enhance the sustainability and accessibility of not only their immediate surroundings but also Penistone and the wider western area of the Borough.

Social & Community Infrastructure Enhancements

From a review of the Oxspring NDPG’s meeting minutes (4th September 2014) we have been able to identify the group’s aspirations for enhancing the community’s social infrastructure. The following projects were identified as being able to improve the social elements of the Village and the well-being of current and future residents:-

Oxpring Neighbourhood Development Plan Group – Community Social Infrastructure Enhancement Aspirations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School – the School is considered to be a success within the Village and one of the best examples of ‘Community spirit’ working at its best. However it is at capacity (despite the web

<p>page stating that it isn't), and resources are under stress. Proposed are suggestions about the future of the school:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a new school at the heart of the community, which is inclusive of sports, health and leisure facilities (to follow), possibly to include a preschool nursery, which would develop the community even further. Concern – there is a suggestion that the school could be closed and pupils moved to a Penistone based facility, as such Oxspring needs to grow, develop, and improve. • If a complete rebuild of the school does not take place then significant investment in buildings and resource need to be allocated to the current site (physical space is an issue). It was noted that there is the possibility of government funding for new schools – more details required. • Developing a community spirit – It is felt that Oxspring is seen by many residents and visitors as a crossroads and place to simply pass through. However during recent resident's group survey, community spirit is an often mentioned as a priority. It is proposed that in future building and community projects, we should drive towards creating a 'heart' to the village. This could be achieved with a new development that included – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School ○ Pre School ○ Sports and fitness – Gym, Tennis, badminton etc. ○ Changing rooms / toilet facilities (for visitors to the village as well/Pennine trail) ○ Community Meeting and function facilities (possibly using a private company to run the non-educational facilities) ○ Youth Club / After School club ○ Health care (as Thurgoland), with drop in facilities for Dentist, Chiropody, Opticians etc. ○ Post Office/ Cash and banking facilities <p>The preference for a site would be central, that could be developed to be the 'Heart of The Village.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth (10 – 17) – It was felt that the village offered very little for younger people to become involved in. A School/Heart of the Village will assist in this, • Sports and Leisure – School /Heart of Village project would include much of this. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cycling – we have an amazing cycling facility, and should maximise this. Required are Better access for all, but particularly families and larger cycles. Cycle Hire/Repair/Accessories. Improved signposting and advertising. Lock and leave areas. ○ Aligned with Cycling – camping, caravan parking, toilet, and accommodation, along with catering and refreshment. Parking for people wishing to join the trail at Oxspring. ○ The Truncheon is the largest regular gathering in the Oxspring/Penistone area – maximise it, signpost it, advertise it and create facilities around it – Changing, parking, Toilets, catering etc. This could be used as an important landmark for Oxspring. ○ General Changing rooms and keep fit facilities, indoor and outdoor. Good Companions, Gardening Clubs (allotments used), and Films clubs as suggested as possible ideas. • The river and banks offer a significant opportunity to open up, develop footpaths, picnic areas, etc. Village shopping facilities, possibly tea room/coffee shop, are vital in developing a social heart to the village. • Older Residents – A community health care facility, either as part of Heart of Village project or individual (as Thurgoland). It is felt that this would allow independent older people to remain as part of the community.
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The development of the Oxspring Fields proposals provide the potential to deliver each of the Village's needs and aspirations.

With regard to the provision of enhanced education facilities the development proposals would be required to deliver a financial contribution towards improving the school's facilities to cater for the pupil places required by the development. Such funding could also be directed toward the delivery of a new school should in the future it be decided that building a new school would be the most viable way forward then we would reason that the most appropriate site for the school would be on land to the West of

Roughbitchworth lane, currently identified as site “SAF 18” in the emerging Local Plan. The land is situated in close proximity to the existing school site and the delivery of a school in this location would have far less of an impact on the Green Belt than residential development.

The development proposals for the Oxspring Fields site include a £500k contribution towards the delivery of a new Community Centre/Sports Pavilion to be at the “Heart of the Village”. We understand that this is a long-standing aspiration of the Village and that there is planning permission in place for the facility, but that a lack of the required funding has led to its non-delivery at this time. The contribution to be provided by YLL can therefore be used to draw further funding from other sources.

In addition to the provision of the financial contribution YLL would also like to work with the Oxspring NDPG on the detailed design of the facility and of course the process of delivering it. YLL have prepared an initial plan for this facility to identify how each of Oxspring NDPG’s identified requirements can be delivered. This plan is enclosed in the Sustainability & Accessibility Study that we have attached to this letter.

In accordance with the aspirations of the Oxspring NDPG it is envisaged that the facility could cater for sports/fitness, youth and after school clubs etc. providing such facilities as; changing rooms; toilets; meeting and function rooms; and health facilities such as a Dr’s surgery. The facility, as proposed within the approved planning permission, is to be located in the historic centre of the Village on the southern side of Sheffield Road, which has significant safety benefits in respect of children no longer having to cross the road from the existing wooden changing facility as they do currently. Its delivery alongside, and as part of, the Oxspring Fields proposals will re-centralise the Village’s services and facilities enabling the creation of a “heart” to the Village as desired by the Oxspring NDPG.

In Oxspring NDPG’s letter to Helen Willows of the Borough Council (dated 15th December 2014) the aspiration to enhance the Village’s sport and recreational facilities through including land under YLL’s control within the Neighbourhood Plan boundary is identified. The letter identifies that further consultation is to take place and we look forward to being part of this process.

In addition to the delivery of a financial contribution towards the delivery of a community facility at the historic centre of the village, the Oxspring Fields proposal also seeks to provide a new country park. The detailed design of the country park will be consulted on with the local community to ensure that it meets the aspirations of the Village. However, at this stage it is considered that the country park could deliver such features as footpaths, trim trails, picnic areas, general kick about areas and play space. The country park will deliver a substantial enhancement to the Village’s current recreational offer.

As part of the new Country Park proposals, located to the Eastern boundary of the site, a new access to the Trans Pennine Trail will be constructed, to make Oxspring a “green hub” of pedestrian and cycle journeys along its routes. Such measures could include the provision of a cycle hire shop, a café, small business units and additional car parking facilities in the south eastern corner of the country park. All of which could aid the tourism offer of the Village. Such measures are attainable and YLL are willing to work with the local community towards their delivery.

In order to provide a comprehensive vision for the delivery of enhanced community and social infrastructure in the Village, the development proposals will also seek to create riverside walkways from Willow Lane to Bower Hill Road; and enhancement to the access to the Trans Pennine Trail. YLL own land along the River Don corridor to the north of the Village (known as the Oxspring Rocher Valley) and as part of the Oxspring Fields development proposals they are willing to create an access to the riverside to include the identified aspirations of footpaths, picnic areas, and the creation of a parish fishing club.

It is clear from the above that the Oxspring Fields development proposals can deliver each of the Village’s identified needs and aspirations. YLL would be delighted to work with you, the Oxspring NDPG and the local community to make this happen.

Summary

The evidence provided above establishes the contribution that the Oxspring Fields development proposals can make towards delivering the identified needs and aspirations of the Village through:-

- **Meeting Housing Needs** – *the development proposals will deliver substantial economic investment to the Village and support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by supplying the identified housing needs of the Village. The level of investment delivered by the provision of the new homes will also facilitate the delivery of significant enhancements to local transport and community infrastructure through the facilitations of the Strategic Public Transport Interchange at Penistone, a Community Centre/sports pavilion and enhanced recreational facilities including a new country park.*
- **Public Transport and Highways Improvements** – *the development proposals will provide funding towards the delivery of significant improvements to the public transport infrastructure of the area through the facilitation of the Strategic Public Transport Interchange at Penistone. The location of the site in respect of the local highway network will also ensure that the existing highway issues of the area will not be exacerbated.*
- **Social and Community Infrastructure Enhancements** – *the development proposals would facilitate enhancements to the Village's social and community infrastructure through providing funding towards the delivery of exceptional community infrastructure projects that reflect the community's needs such as a Community Centre/sports pavilion; the delivery of a new country park; creation of riverside walks and a parish fishing club; improvements to accessibility and promotion of the Trans Pennine Trail; and Improvements to education facilities.*

The Oxspring Fields development proposals are the only site that would enable the delivery of the Village's identified needs and aspirations. There are no other development proposals that have the potential to do this, and, importantly, we believe that their delivery would not be possible without the Oxspring Fields proposals.

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework we consider there to be exceptional circumstances for the removal of this site from the Green Belt to enable its allocation for the development of new homes, recreational facilities and the delivery of the Penistone Strategic Transport Interchange.

PB Planning and YLL truly believe that there are no other sites in the Village or the Penistone area that can deliver equivalent benefits to the local community. Which is why we are committed to working in partnership with yourself, Oxspring NDPG and local residents to seek to facilitate the delivery of the Village's identified needs and aspirations.

Following your review of this letter we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



PAUL BUTLER

Director