

Mrs Ruth Rovira-Wilde  
Chair of Steering Group  
Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan  
18 Brookfield  
Oxspring  
SHEFFIELD  
South Yorkshire  
S36 8WG

**SENT BY EMAIL AND POST**

6<sup>th</sup> February 2015

Dear Mrs Rovira-Wilde,

**OXSPRING FIELDS DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER THE NEEDS & ASPIRATIONS OF OXSPRING & PENISTONE**

Thank you for your email.

We note your point in respect of contacting Hunshelf PC and this is something that we have in hand. However we thought it was appropriate to speak to Oxspring PC in the first instance given the location and predominant beneficiaries of the site.

My client, Yorkshire Land Limited (YLL) has held a variety of land interests within Oxspring since 1989 and during this time have brought forward for development the Millstones, and Longley Ings residential developments together with the Martree Business Park, all of which were Brownfield sites. In addition, they have also brought forward the Brookfield housing development which was a Greenfield site developed by David Wilson Homes and 'sold' as executive family homes.

During the late 1990's, YLL promoted the Brookfield development through the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) process and at that time there was strong opposition to the development from both existing Oxspring residents and the Borough Council. However, during the public plan inquiry the Inspector recognised that Oxspring was a sustainable and well located settlement for additional housing development. He felt this to be particularly so in the light of its relationship to Penistone and the proposed allocation of land for employment development (Martree business Park).

This view was shared by the Council throughout the UDP process, initially recognised in Volume 14 Western Rural Community Area Draft (1993) and later in the adopted Western Rural Community Area (Volume 13 paragraph 4.12) UDP (2000) that:

*"Oxpring is one of the locations in the Western Community Area for additional development because of its physical relationship to the Penistone Urban Area and because it has the infrastructure capacity to accommodate some further development without serious detriment to the quality and character of the Green Belt."*

YLL has a consistent track record of successfully promoting the development of their land through the development plan process. Their focus and expertise is identifying how their developments can compassionately meet the identified/established needs of communities and committing to the delivery of them. Their commitment to bringing forward development has presented an opportunity for many new residents to move into this attractive village in developments such as Brookfield, Longley Ings and Millstones.

As there are currently no available Brownfield sites in Oxspring, if it can be reasonably accepted that the development of a Greenfield site would have limited or no environmental impact yet could deliver significant economic and social benefits to the Village, then we believe it is both fair and reasonable to also give other individuals / families (including those on low incomes and also existing residents who wish to stay within the

Village via down/up sizing etc.) the opportunity of a new home in Oxspring and in doing so ensuring the Village's sustainable growth.

Though the Borough Council have not identified the release of any housing allocations in the Village at this point, historically Oxspring has been considered a sustainable location for housing development as set out in the Councils adopted UDP. Previous developments in the Village have provided people the opportunity to meet their housing needs and live in an area in which they choose to live. The previous developments include Greenfield sites which, though once considered controversial, are now considered an integral part of the Village. YLL believe their development proposals at Oxspring Fields will provide these same opportunities, but in addition they can deliver **far more benefits to the local community** and are situated in a more sustainable location in respect of connectivity to the Village. In addition they will also have far less impact on the Green Belt and other environmental considerations than the proposed Safeguarded land designation, reference SAF 18.

As professionals in the development industry, all parties, not least the Borough Council, are clearly aware of the importance of National Green Belt policies.

As you will recall from the Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan video which features the Council's senior planning policy officer Helen Willows, she asserts the role of the Green belt as a National Policy designation and confirms that the Council must find exceptional circumstances to justify development within the Green Belt. Subsequently Ms Willows states that the Council believe that the Borough's Economic Growth aspirations (of which delivering the Borough's housing requirement is an integral contributor to) represents exceptional circumstances. This matter will of course be scrutinised at the Local Plan examination by a senior planning Inspector.

It is encouraging to hear that my client is invited to be involved in the ongoing preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and we will respond to the consultation draft document prior to the identified deadline. However, we would like to say now that we are disappointed that the Neighbourhood Plan Group have failed to consult with YLL before proposing development on land held either in its ownership or under its legal control. By placing these proposals in the public domain it could be considered misleading to local residents given the landowner has not agreed to bring the land forward for the uses proposed by the Neighbourhood Plan Group. You will note from the content of our letter dated 20<sup>th</sup> January 2015 that we are willing to work with you to discuss the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plans aspirations, but it is evident that their provision will not be financially viable without the delivery of our client's development proposals at their Oxspring Fields site. We know of no other feasible funding sources available.

In respect of your more detailed comments with regards to development within the Green Belt, the Borough Council has identified in its Draft Local Plan 2014 on Page 11, Paragraph 3.25:

*"Our Housing and employment needs and aspirations cannot be accommodated without the need to release land from the Green Belt."*

We consider that a number of the sites that have currently been identified for release will not deliver the quantum and type of homes needed to meet the Borough's economic and housing strategies. We also disagree with the identified strategy of not seeking to identify housing allocations in the Borough's Villages as this will not foster the sustainable growth of the Borough nor enable such settlements to deliver their identified needs and aspirations. These are matters which we are taking up directly with the Borough Council.

Turning to Oxspring, and specifically the development of the Oxspring Fields site, whilst we accept that housing need in isolation is not considered a very special circumstance for the release of the site from the Green Belt this, in combination with my client's desire to **deliver a substantial number of community benefits to the Village**, has led to the drafting of a number of documents which present a viable Planning case that accords with Paragraph 87 and Paragraph 88 of the National Planning Policy Framework. We also consider that our client's site **does not** meet any of the five Green Belt purposes that would render it suitable to retain the site within Green Belt and have provided sound evidence to demonstrate this.

We therefore consider that the package of benefits that my client's site can deliver would constitute "very special circumstances". Particularly when those benefits align to the aspirations of the draft Neighbourhood Plan which we believe are not deliverable without the development of my client's site.

In addition, as you will note from the Sustainability & Accessibility statement, the Oxspring Fields proposals have the potential to enhance the sustainability of the Village and surrounding area.

You rightly identify in your email that the Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan needs to be in general conformity with the Borough Local Plan. However, given the Borough's Local Plan is at the consultation stage there is an opportunity for your group to proactively influence the production of this document to ensure the delivery of the Village's identified needs and aspirations.

Clearly where we disagree with the Neighbourhood Planning group is the amount of new homes required during the Local Plan Period. As previously stated the Oxspring Fields site could deliver 150 new homes over the 19 year development plan period (2014-2033) this would equate to only eight homes per annum of which 2.5 would be affordable, at no cost to the public purse.

Moving forward we will provide our response to the draft Neighbourhood Plan before the identified deadline. Overall we are extremely supportive of a number of the identified aspirations of the plan as these align with our own and they will enhance the sustainability of the Village in the context of Paragraph 6 to 10 of the NPPF.

Whilst the aspirations of the Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan Group to facilitate improved Sports, Recreation, Leisure and Amenity facilities (including a new community Building/Sports Pavilion) are commendable it is clear that the key (and financial ability) to ensuring the delivery of those aspirations is the delivery of my client's Oxspring Field's proposals, especially given that the delivery of your Neighbourhood Plan relies on the availability of my client's land.

We wish to work with you and the Neighbourhood Plan Group towards the delivery of an exemplary Neighbourhood Plan which can be considered "best practice" in respect of providing evidence of the significant number of benefits that can be delivered when the local community and developers work together.

Whilst many of the Neighbourhood Plan's identified concepts are supported, they will remain as theoretical concepts unless feasible and viable delivery mechanisms are identified. Evidence of this is presented by the inability to generate the funding necessary to deliver the sports pavilion for which the Parish council were first granted planning permission over 7 years ago.

YLL are the only feasible and viable delivery mechanism available to deliver the communities aspirations and wish to work with the Neighbourhood Plan Group to deliver a future for the village that they, the Neighbourhood Plan Group and most importantly the local community can be proud of.

We look forward to discussing this point with you in the near future.

Kind regards,



**PAUL BUTLER**  
Director

Cc: Mrs A Walker – Vice Chair of Oxspring Parish Council - 9 Brookfield, Oxspring, S36 8WG