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25<sup>th</sup> February 2015

Dear Ms Willows,

**OXSPRING FIELDS DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS – RESPONSE TO OXSPRING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROPOSED BOUNDARY AMENDMENT**

We write on behalf of Yorkshire Land Ltd (YLL) in response to the current consultation of the proposed extension to the Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan boundary.

The proposed extension to the Neighbourhood Plan boundary seeks to incorporate an area of land which is under the legal control of YLL, who are promoting it as part of their comprehensive residential development proposals known as Oxspring Fields.

YLL has a number of land interests within the area and are keen to work with the Borough Council, the Neighbourhood Plan Group and other local stakeholders to proactively consider the release of their land to enable the delivery of the significant number of benefits that their Oxspring Fields development proposals can provide for the local area.

Whilst YLL support the principle of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan boundary extension, they **object** to the boundary extension as currently proposed, as they believe that a further increase, to capture the whole of the land included within their Oxspring Fields development proposals is necessary, in order to successfully facilitate the delivery of the Village's identified needs and ambitions.

No approach has been made to YLL by either Oxspring Parish Council or the Neighbourhood Plan Group to discuss the inclusion of land under their legal control within the draft Neighbourhood Plan. Both Oxspring Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Group have been aware of YLL's Oxspring Fields Proposals since the outset of the Neighbourhood Plan Process.

Following YLL's recent approach to the Neighbourhood Plan Group correspondence has been exchanged and we now hope that more constructive discussions will take place in the coming months focusing on YLL's representations to the Draft Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan which identify that the Village's identified needs and ambitions (as set out in the Neighbourhood Plan) are not deliverable without the development of the Oxspring Fields site. A copy of YLL's representations to the draft Neighbourhood Plan are enclosed with this letter for your information.

Overall, YLL are concerned that no evidence is presented within the draft Neighbourhood Plan document to identify how the identified needs and ambitions of the Village will be facilitated without the delivery of new homes as part of the Oxspring Fields development.

The benefits that the Oxspring Fields development proposals will deliver to the local area are summarised in the bullet points below. Full details of these benefits area are set out within the enclosed Sustainability & Accessibility Study:-

- Delivery of approximately 150 new homes providing a major contribution to delivering open market housing which includes the delivery of 36 affordable homes, at no cost to the public purse, to help re-balance the Borough's Housing Supply, by directing more development to Oxspring and Penistone;
- Investment of Capital Expenditure of £18m creating 46 direct construction jobs & 65 indirect construction jobs of which a number will be retained in the local area;
- New Homes Bonus of £1,249,248 of which a proportion will be spent in the local area and £208,208 additional Council Tax receipts per annum to help retain local services;
- New first occupation Retail & Leisure Expenditure of £715,000 & ongoing expenditure of £2,621,438 each year by new residents spent in local shops and facilities;
- Provision of £500k funding and the land required to deliver a new Strategic Public Transport Interchange on land adjoining Penistone railway station, which will also include a 100 space car park, a pedestrian bridge crossing, a tourist information centre, café and toilets. This would be delivered in conjunction with draft housing Site allocation H81 (Land South of Halifax Road, Penistone);
- Delivery of significant community and recreation benefits for Oxspring 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 Doctors 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 area's tourism offer of the Trans Pennine Trail through improving accessibility (including dedicated disabled access) and providing facilities such as a cycle hire shop, a café and other appropriate facilities. Further details of this facility will be provided in the coming weeks; and,
- Creation of riverside walks through the Oxspring Rocher valley, providing the potential for the formation of footpaths, picnic areas and a local fishing club. All of these are long held aspirations of Oxspring Parish Council

Extending the area of the Neighbourhood Plan boundary to incorporate the whole of the Oxspring Fields development proposals would comply with the guidance presented in the National Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph 033 Ref ID 41-033-20140306, as the extension would be well related to:-

- The Village or settlement boundaries, which could reflect areas of planned expansion;
- The catchment area for walking to local services such as shops, primary schools, doctors' surgery, parks or other facilities (especially in consideration of the new and enhanced facilities that the Oxspring Fields development can deliver, as set out above);
- The area where formal or informal networks of community based groups operate (the Oxspring Fields site lies immediately adjacent to the East of the existing Parish recreation ground, which will also be vastly enhanced though the delivery of new sports facilities and a Community Building/sports pavilion);
- Infrastructure or physical features define a natural boundary, for example a major road or railway line or waterway (in this instance particular emphasis should be given to the presence of the Trans Pennine Trail, forming the sites Southern boundary, the B6462 'Sheffield Road', forming the

Northern Boundary, the largely disused industrial site forming the eastern boundary and the village recreation ground forming the Western Boundary);

- The natural setting or features in an area (particularly the existence of four strong, defensible features which contain the site to the North, South, East and West, including the Trans Pennine Trail, the B6462 'Sheffield Road' the Village recreation ground and the largely disused industrial site); and
- The size of the population (living and working) in the area.

Enclosed with this letter is an indicative masterplan of the Oxspring Fields proposals which provides full details of the area of land that YLL believe should be included within the Neighbourhood Plan boundary, to ensure the successful facilitation of the identified needs and aspirations of the village.

YLL support a number of the objectives identified within the draft Neighbourhood Plan as these align with their own (as identified above) and they will provide considerable benefits to Oxspring. However, there is simply no means of facilitating them without the delivery of new homes as part of the Oxspring Fields development proposals. YLL's proposals will deliver both the funding and land required.

The justification for the proposed extension to the Neighbourhood Plan boundary is set out in the Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan Group's letter dated 14<sup>th</sup> December 2014:-

*"The Neighbourhood Plan committee wish to amend the boundary to include the additional field on Sheffield Road because this field is adjacent to the community sport's field, part of which the Neighbourhood Plan proposes to develop with ancillary sports facilities (including football, cricket pitches, tennis courts etc). It would be desirable to open up this adjacent field also to create a larger recreational/leisure/sports hub and create better links & access to the TPT. The adjacent field already includes an access road to the TPT which is used by local people, walkers & running clubs & the Neighbourhood Plan would wish to protect and enhance such a use within the Green Belt."*

As identified above YLL support the principle of the proposed boundary extension, however, they **object** to the boundary extension as currently proposed, as they believe that the boundary should be increased further to capture the whole of the land included within their Oxspring Fields development proposals, in order to successfully facilitate the delivery of all of the benefits that it can provide.

Many of the benefits set out above have been identified by the Neighbourhood Plan Group as needs and aspirations of the Village. Evidence of which is presented in the consultation draft Neighbourhood Plan; the group's meeting minutes; and specifically in the videos of the groups meeting with yourself which can be found at the following link:- <http://www.oxspringplan.org.uk/about/videos/>

Whilst many of the Neighbourhood Plan's identified ambitions are supported by YLL 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 a new 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 provide the Village's aspirations and the Oxspring Fields Proposals present an unrivalled opportunity to the Neighbourhood Plan Group to deliver a future for the village that they, and most importantly the local community can be proud of.

If the Neighbourhood Plan boundary is not extended to include the Oxspring Field's development proposals then there is simply no means of facilitating the delivery of the Village's identified needs and aspirations. As identified above, YLL's proposals at the Oxspring Fields site will deliver both the funding and land required.

We acknowledge national planning policy guidance which identifies that a Neighbourhood Plan must 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 the Neighbourhood Plan Group and the local community to proactively contribute to and influence the production of the Borough Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan to ensure the delivery of the Village's identified needs and aspirations.

National Planning Policy Guidance clearly states that Neighbourhood Plan bodies should plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan. More specifically [Paragraph 184](#) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies. They can however promote **more** development, especially where development proposals are considered to achieve the principles of sustainable development.

During the previous Unitary Development plan (UDP) examination the Inspector recognised Oxspring as a sustainable and well located settlement for additional development. He felt this to be particularly so in the light of its relationship to Penistone and the location of Penistone's employment facilities which connect Penistone with Oxspring. This view was shared by the Borough 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:-

*“Oxspring 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.”*

The development of the Oxspring Fields site will provide an exemplary development and will enable the delivery of the NPPF's sustainable development objectives through the delivery of mutual enhancements to the economic, social and environmental characteristics of Oxspring, Penistone and the wider Barnsley Borough as a whole.

In order to meet the National Planning Policy Framework's objective of significantly boosting the supply of housing land through the delivery of sustainable developments, YLL believe that developments such as the Oxspring Fields proposals, which can provide an unprecedented number of economic, social and environmental benefits, should be supported.

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. Whilst the positive benefits of the scheme for Oxspring and Penistone will be considerable, the overall impact of the proposals will be minimal when viewed in the wider Borough context, whilst also enabling the delivery of a wide mix of housing for those on low incomes, first time buyers through to families and those wishing to up/down size, to meet the Council's identified housing needs.

With regard to the long term sustainability of the area's transportation infrastructure, 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 the front page article from the Barnsley Chronicle (Penistone Edition) dated 16<sup>th</sup> January 2015. The development of the proposed draft housing allocations to the south of Penistone, especially those located in and around Cubley, will only serve to exacerbate the existing highways issues of the town and this will lead to a large increase in traffic utilising country lanes, in and around both Penistone and the surrounding Parishes, in an attempt to bypass the congestion.

In contrast, access into the proposed Oxspring Fields site will be directly from the B6462 'Sheffield Road' with one or two points of access being easily achievable. To the south east the B6462 leads to the A629 Halifax Road at a priority junction. From here work-related trips to and from places such as Barnsley, Sheffield, Leeds and Huddersfield can access the wider highway network without the need to utilise narrow country lanes or travel directly through the congested Town centre of Penistone.

In addition during June 2014, South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYLTE) acknowledged in correspondence, that the proximity of the Oxspring Fields proposal site to the Trans Pennine Trail as a very good feature which should not be overlooked. *“The high levels of accessibility to the TPT promote this site as a very sustainable option given the connections to a high quality walking and cycling network... As the site is within 2km from the station, SYLTE would deem it acceptable to expect a proportion of cycle based park and riding from Penistone, as well as a higher proportion of cycling trips for commuter purposes.”*

As part of their Oxspring Fields proposals, and in combination with their scheme south of Halifax Road, Penistone (a draft housing allocation site), YLL also intend to facilitate the delivery of a new Strategic Public Transport Interchange at Penistone Train Station. This 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 the Western 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, providing jobs, 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.

The provision of the Strategic Public Transport Interchange in Penistone would also be supported by Sheffield City Council. In their response to the draft Local Plan (dated 10<sup>th</sup> 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 YLL’s proposed Oxspring Fields site. It also adds to the need to deliver the proposed Penistone Strategic 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 unsatisfactory Bus layover.

Whilst the cost of delivering these facilities is substantial, YLL are committed to their delivery. The total funding being offered by YLL towards the provision of the facility is £1m (£500k each from both their Penistone and Oxspring sites) alongside the “gifting” of the required land (which is currently in their ownership) at nil cost, and which has a current book value of £750k. This equates to a total contribution of £1.75m.

The facilitation of the Strategic Public Transport Interchange through the delivery of YLL’s 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.

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 which it will provide to the Principal Town, the Western Rural villages (including Oxspring) and overall the Borough as a whole, will not be possible.

Due to a number of development constraints associated with the majority of the draft housing allocations in the Penistone area, should these constraints be overcome, the potential for each of these sites to deliver additional community benefits is severely limited in comparison to the Oxspring Fields Proposal.

YLL appreciate that housing schemes can be contentious. Consequently, they hope you will agree that in order for local communities to support new developments, housing schemes that can provide the number of benefits that the Oxspring Fields proposals can deliver should be given priority over those that cannot.

Whilst we accept that housing need in isolation is not considered a very special circumstance for the release of the Oxspring Fields site from the Green Belt this, in combination with YLL'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 NPPF. We also consider that the Oxspring Fields 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 consider that the package of benefits that the Oxspring Field's development can deliver would constitute "very special circumstances" in respect of national Green Belt planning policy guidance. Particularly when it can be considered that those benefits align to the aspirations of the draft Neighbourhood Plan, which are not deliverable without the development of the Oxspring Fields site.

The exemplary composition of the proposed development enables the Borough Council to support the release of the site within the Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan on grounds of "very special circumstances" whilst still being able to protect other less suitable Green Belt sites in the Borough's other Villages from un-sustainable development. We are unaware of any other proposed development sites located in the Borough's other Villages, that can deliver the number of benefits that the Oxspring Fields development proposals can provide.

We therefore believe that the Borough Council could support the delivery of the Oxspring Fields development and can seek to work proactively with YLL, the Neighbourhood Plan Group and local residents 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.

### **Summary**

Whilst YLL support the principle of the proposed boundary extension, they **object** to the boundary extension as currently proposed as they believe that the boundary should be increased to capture the whole of the land included within their Oxspring Fields development proposals, in order to successfully facilitate the delivery of the Village's identified needs and ambitions.

The identified needs and ambitions of Oxspring, as set out in the draft Neighbourhood Plan, will not be delivered unless the Neighbourhood Plan boundary is extended to include the Oxspring Fields development proposals. The proposals will deliver both the funding and land required.

The Oxspring Fields development proposals present a rare and unprecedented opportunity for both Oxspring and Penistone. Land, owned privately by YLL, is being offered to provide unrivalled community benefits that will facilitate the sustainable development of the area and to enable the delivery of the desires and recognised needs of both Oxspring and Penistone.

YLL is committed to working in partnership with the Borough Council, Oxspring Parish Council/Neighbourhood Plan Group and local residents to seek to successfully facilitate the delivery of the Village's identified needs and aspirations.

The Oxspring Fields development proposals offer the only opportunity to deliver the Village's identified needs and aspirations and the land's release from the Green Belt would comply with national planning policy guidance, whilst also enabling the Council to maintain their position in respect of protecting other less suitable Green Belt sites within the Borough from un-sustainable development.

We trust that the Borough Council will acknowledge our client's comments contained within this representation and advise Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan group appropriately in order to ensure the successful delivery of a robust, viable and deliverable Neighbourhood Plan document.

Yours sincerely



**PAUL BUTLER**

Director