

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

15<sup>th</sup> April 2015

Dear Mrs Rovira-Wilde,

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

We write to you as the Chair of the Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan Group (NPG) and in response to the NPG's comments posted on their website and Facebook page in relation to Yorkshire Land Limited's (YLL) commencement of community consultation with local residents in association with their Oxspring Fields development proposals.

We consider it pertinent to respond to these comments in order to provide local residents with transparency whilst considering the information we have presented within the distributed Oxspring Fields consultation brochure and on the [www.oxspring-fields.co.uk](http://www.oxspring-fields.co.uk) website.

The NPG's comments to which this letter relates it as follows:-

***“The recent document from Yorkshire Land Ltd which has been posted to residents and businesses in Oxspring is nothing to do with the Neighbourhood Plan and has come out of the blue. This proposed development is on green belt land which is part of the parish council of Hunshelf. The whole purpose of the Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan is to protect this type of large scale development from taking place in the village of Oxspring and to protect the green belt. This particular piece of land is outside the NP boundary and any proposed developments on it will not form any part of the NP.”***

Whilst we appreciate that the above comments have recently been updated on the NPG website, they remain unchanged on the Facebook page. We respond to each element accordingly below and we also direct you towards our letter to Oxspring Parish Council (dated 10<sup>th</sup> April 2015) which provides further evidence in respect of the points made below and is available on the [www.oxspring-fields.co.uk](http://www.oxspring-fields.co.uk) website.

The comment identifies that YLL's community consultation is *“nothing to do with the Neighbourhood Plan and has come out of the blue”*. YLL have made it clear in all their correspondence that their Oxspring Fields development proposals are entirely separate to the Neighbourhood Plan. Though separate in preparation, the identified objectives and aspirations are largely the same. The key difference of course is that the Oxspring Fields development can deliver the Village's identified needs and aspirations. The Neighbourhood Plan as currently drafted cannot.

In respect of the comment made identifying that the development proposals and community consultation that YLL are undertaking is out of the blue, we consider this statement to be incorrect. Oxspring Parish Council (OPC), of which the NPG is a subsidiary of, were made aware of the development proposals over 17 months ago. Full details of this are set out in YLL's letter to the OPC dated 10<sup>th</sup> April 2015. Furthermore, in all of our correspondence with the NPG since January 2015 we have sought to commence constructive discussions with regard to the delivery of the Village's identified needs and aspirations. In our correspondence we have also identified our desire to consult with local residents and given that the NPG have ignored YLL's requests to work together at this point, YLL have had no option

but to progress with their own community consultation work. Copies of this correspondence is available on the [www.oxspring-fields.co.uk](http://www.oxspring-fields.co.uk) website.

With regard to the NPG comments made in respect of the location of the site in the Green Belt; protecting the Green Belt from large scale developments; and the site being located outside of the Neighbourhood Plan boundary and within Hunshelf Parish, we wish to make the following comments.

Whilst the Oxspring Fields site is currently designated as Green Belt land we feel it prudent to note that the NPG do not appear to object to the principal of built development taking place on the site, as illustrated in the Consultation Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

Further evidence on this point is provided by the NPG's application to extend the boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area to include a proportion of the Oxspring Fields site to ensure sufficient land is available to deliver Community Sports Changing Rooms; a Terrace Café; a Cycle Hub; a Farmers Market; an Athletics Track; a Rugby/Football Pitch; and a new access road.

Whilst YLL support the aspirations of the Neighbourhood Plan and agree that built development at the site would not have an inappropriate impact on the Green Belt, without the delivery of new homes at the scale proposed within the Oxspring Fields proposals there will be no means of funding the NPG's current aspirations. Furthermore, YLL have not provided consent for such a development to take place on land which is under their control.

YLL have written to Hunshelf Parish Council to seek to arrange to meet with them to discuss the Oxspring Fields proposals and hope that a meeting can be arranged in the future. We believe that a further extension of the Neighbourhood Plan boundary to incorporate the whole of the Oxspring Fields site would enable the delivery of the Village's aspirations and additional benefits (including a Country Park) but will importantly not have an adverse impact on the character of the local landscape. Evidence in respect of the limited impact of the Oxspring Field's proposals on the landscape character of the area, prepared by Smeeden Foreman Landscape Consultants, is available on the [www.oxspring-fields.co.uk](http://www.oxspring-fields.co.uk) website. Importantly, the report also concludes that the Oxspring Fields site **does not** meet any of the National Planning Policy Framework's (NPPF) five purposes for retaining/placing land within the Green Belt.

With regard to the NPG point in respect of seeking to "*protect this type of large scale development from taking place*". This poses two questions. The first being how do the NPG believe they can deliver the Village's housing needs and secondly, how will the NPG generate the required funding to deliver the aspirations of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Oxspring Housing Needs Capacity Study prepared by URS on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan Group 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 draft Neighbourhood Plan provides no policies, nor does it identify the intention to deliver the identified housing needs presented in an evidence base document prepared on its behalf. On this basis we would question the soundness of the housing policies of the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

The Oxspring Fields development proposals can deliver the entirety of the Village's housing needs identified in the URS study, however, through the delivery of only 80 further homes (150 in total) the development proposals can also deliver a further significant number of benefits with it.

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council's (BMBC) own assessment of the Oxspring Fields site (Ref 681) within the 2012 SHLAA identified the site as representing a Category 1 'deliverable' residential development site. It specifically identified that it performed well against suitability, availability and achievability criteria. The potential impact of the site on the character of the area's landscape was assessed as part of this process. The SHLAA also stated that the development of the site provides the potential to deliver much needed low-density housing. A direct response to the Borough's economic and housing strategy aspirations. Finally, BMBC have identified in their draft Local Plan that the development

of land currently designated as Green Belt is needed in order to deliver the Borough's economic and housing strategy.

Whilst the NPG can currently use the argument that the draft Barnsley Local Plan seeks to retain the Oxspring Fields site within the Green Belt, we do not consider this to be a valid reason to constrain the development of the site and the delivery of the Village's identified aspirations. Evidence has been provided by YLL and BMBC's own evidence to demonstrate that the site does not meet any of the NPPF's five Green Belt purposes, that the site will not have an adverse impact on the character of the local landscape and that the site is considered to be a deliverable residential development site.

Accordingly, the NPG could promote the release of the site on account of delivering the identified aspirations of the Village, especially when there is no other available mechanism to do so. Paragraph 184 of the NPPF states that Neighbourhood Plans should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan, however, they can promote alternative allocations/designations or more development where proposals are considered to achieve the principles of sustainable development. We consider that the development of the Oxspring Fields site would 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.

Furthermore, the proposed Oxspring Fields development represents a sound, robust and deliverable alternative development to the proposed safeguarded land designation "SAF18", Land North and South of Roughbitchworth Lane, Oxspring" which is located within the Green Belt, measures 5.1Ha in size and is capable of delivering in excess of 150 homes, which would be served from new access points onto Roughbitchworth Lane. The OPC has previously made written representations to BMBC, objecting strongly to the development of this site (SAF 18) for housing, citing a number of concerns including an increase in traffic using narrow country lanes and surface water drainage/flooding issues. In view of this, the NPG could request that BMBC re-designate this land (site SAF 18) as Green Belt, given that it meets a number of Green Belt functions, and in turn request the removal of the Oxspring Fields site from the Green Belt. In contrast to the safeguarded land, the Oxspring Fields site benefits from strong, logical and defensible boundaries, is deliverable and has no access or drainage issues.

The Oxspring Fields development proposals offer the only viable opportunity to deliver the Village's identified needs and aspirations, and the site's release from the Green Belt and inclusion in the Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan would comply with National Planning Policy Guidance, even in the event that BMBC's emerging Local Plan strategy concerning future development in Oxspring remains the same.

The inclusion of the Oxspring Fields development within the Neighbourhood Plan would also enable Oxspring Parish Council, together in agreement with Hunshelf Parish Council, to receive and utilise 25% of any Community Infrastructure Levy payments and Government New Homes Bonus payments received from the development which could equate to over £1.5m.

Finally, we are of the firm view that the evidence presented within the number of documents which are available on the [www.oxspring-fields.co.uk](http://www.oxspring-fields.co.uk) website provide a viable planning case that accords with Paragraph 87 and Paragraph 88 of the National Planning Policy Framework in that the package of community benefits being offered would constitute "very special circumstances" to warrant the release of the site outside of the Neighbourhood Plan or Barnsley Local Plan process. Especially when the development of the site is the only viable mechanism for the delivery of the Village's needs and aspirations.

In conclusion, the key driver behind the Oxspring Fields development proposals is to deliver the aspirations of the Village. At this time the NPG has provided no evidence to demonstrate that either the funding or the land required to successfully deliver the policies or aspirations contained within the Neighbourhood Plan is currently, or can ever be, in place.

The only mechanism that can and will ensure the delivery of many of the aspirations and proposals contained within the Neighbourhood Plan is YLL via the development of their Oxspring Fields proposals,

and we again urge the NPG to start to work constructively and proactively with YLL to seize this rare and unprecedented opportunity to obtain the great number of public benefits that are available for the Parish.

Without the provision of suitable evidence to demonstrate the delivery of the draft Neighbourhood Plan, surely no weight can be attached to the document by its reader, the local residents of the Village. A document that identifies theoretical policies without identifying how they can be delivered in practice is misleading to the public and cannot be considered sound.

Surely the time has now arrived for all parties to meet to discuss the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan's aspirations. If the NPG maintain their current stance, which at presents seems to be one that seeks to ignore the Oxspring Fields development proposals, the local community's aspirations will simply not be delivered.

Furthermore, we wish to make it clear here that ignoring YLL's development proposals will not stop them from continuing to promote a development that they strongly believe in and which can provide a significant number of benefits to the Village.

We hope that the NPG will now work with YLL 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 to an area when the local community and developers work together.

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

Following the receipt of the consultation responses from our community consultation programme we will review our proposals and liaise with Oxspring Parish Council and the NPG appropriately.

Kind regards,



**PAUL BUTLER**  
Director