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Our Ref YLL/OL/11.01

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An open Letter to Residents of Oxspring

All documents referred to in this letter are available to view on the Oxspring Fields Website

Oxspring Parish Council (OPC) has consistently disregarded our numerous attempts to engage since January 2014 in order to discuss the ongoing Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan and how the housing required to fulfil the independently assessed housing needs of the village can be delivered along with other identified community benefits.

OPC is clearly aware of the identified requirement for new housing across all tenures (including Affordable) to meet the needs of the Parish and also that Affordable housing is unlikely to be delivered in Oxspring from developments consisting of less than fifteen new homes.

OPC have for well over fifteen years held strong aspirations for the construction and delivery of a comprehensive Sports and Community Building on the village sports field (www.oxspring-centre.org.uk), a riverside walkway from Willow Bridge to Bower Hill through the Oxspring Rocher Valley (which is in YLL's ownership) and also for the creation of a local Parish fishing club with access to the river Don in this location.

YLL can deliver all of the above at no cost to the Parish or the Public purse. It is therefore very disappointing and in our opinion, wholly wrong, that members of OPC and its Neighbourhood Plan Group who have taken a 'NIMBY' attitude and personally oppose the delivery of housing on the scale that is required to meet Oxspring's needs, are using the Neighbourhood Plan as vehicle to obstruct and prevent our proposals which can satisfy, in full, the identified housing needs of the Parish and deliver a myriad of long desired community benefits

Our self explanatory letters of 15 July 2015 (Our Ref [YLL-NP-07.01](#)) and 23 October 2015 (Our Ref [YLL-NP-10.01B](#)) to the Joint Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Group and

15 July 2015 (Our Ref YLL-IG-07.01) and 26 October 2015 (Our Ref YLL-IG-10.01) to the Chairman of OPC, provide a detailed insight and illustrate our open attempts to work with OPC and The Neighbourhood Plan Group by once again requesting for a meeting between us.

It was not until the 10 November 2015, following receipt of our chasing letter of 9 November 2015 (Our Ref YLL-OPC-11.01), that the Clerk to the Parish Council responded formally to our letters of 23 and 26 October, stating that the Parish Council had discussed them at its meeting on 2 November 2015 and wished to decline our request for a meeting.

As can be observed from our letter to Mr Ian Goldthorpe, Chairman of OPC, dated 15 July 2015 (Our ref YLL-IG-07.01); both he and the Vice Chair of OPC, Mrs Ann Walker, met with myself, Samuel Green (YLL) and John Wade (Oxspring Parishioner and an ex long serving Borough, District, Town and Parish Councillor) on Oxspring Sports Fields in November 2013, where we initially informed them of the 'Oxspring Fields' proposals as an alternative site for housing to that of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council's (BMBC) draft proposal off Roughbirchworth Lane, Oxspring, which was identified with site reference 'LD10' (Land North and South of Roughbirchworth Lane – 111 Executive homes – Site Area 5.10 ha).

At that time, we were led to believe OPC felt that due to the numerous problems they had identified with site 'LD10', it would be preferable to request BMBC to redesignate it as Green Belt land and instead identify an alternative, more suitable site to replace it. This way there would be no significant loss of Green Belt in the locality.

OPC remain strongly opposed to housing development on the site to the North and South of Roughbirchworth Lane for the reasons set out in their written objections to BMBC which are reproduced at Appendix D and E of the PB Planning (PBP) Housing Deliverability and Capacity Assessment (PBP Assessment) of July 2015.

In 2014, BMBC changed the format of its Development Plan from a 'Local Development Framework' to the Barnsley 'Local Plan'. The draft Local Plan, which underwent Public Consultation between 10 November 2014 and 11 January 2015, proposes that the site North and South of Roughbirchworth Lane should remain allocated as Safeguarded Land (Site reference 'SAF 18') rather than a housing proposal.

OPC objected to the 'Safeguarded Land' site proposal 'SAF 18' in a letter to BMBC dated 10 January 2015, requesting that BMBC now re-allocate the farm land as Green Belt. OPC's letter forms Appendix E of the PBP Assessment

We urge you to read and carefully consider paragraph's '3' through to '5.11' of the PBP Assessment. This document provides a factual and balanced appraisal irrespective of whether you support or oppose our Oxspring Fields proposals.

Independent Consultants 'URS' (who were appointed by Planning Aid England on behalf of OPC) have identified in their Housing needs and Capacity report (published in 2014) that there is a requirement for 68 new homes to meet the needs of the Parish between 2008 and 2026.

Taking into consideration that both the Barnsley Local Plan and Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan will, when adopted, inform development in the area until the year 2033, the URS housing figure necessarily rises to circa 96 new homes when the extra seven years of development plan are incorporated (2026 to 2033). This matter is addressed in great detail in the PBP letter of 7 October 2015 to Louise Kirkup of Kirkwells Limited (the consultants instructed by OPC in July 2015 to help progress the Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan).

BMBC has confirmed in the draft Local Plan, that the Borough's housing needs and aspirations cannot be accommodated without the need to release land from the Green Belt. This is also confirmed by a BMBC Senior Planning Policy Officer Ms Helen Willows in ONP's promotional video of a meeting which took place upon Oxspring Sports field on Tuesday 25 February 2014 (<http://www.oxspringplan.org.uk/about/videos/>). A transcript of the video is available on the Oxspring Fields website.

BMBC have now stated that they do not intend to allocate the proposed Oxspring Fields site for housing development because it is currently Green Belt land and because they believe that doing so would conflict with their adopted Spatial Strategy.

We believe that delivering the identified housing needs of Oxspring **would not conflict** with the Councils Spatial Strategy if BMBC was minded to remove the Oxspring Fields site from the Green Belt, because the Adopted Core Strategy (of which the Spatial Strategy forms a part) **does not** preclude housing development in the villages if it is consistent with Green Belt Policy, In fact:

- Core Strategy Policy CSP 8 confirms that development will be allowed in the villages if it is consistent with Green Belt policy, is necessary for the viability of the settlement and to meet local needs

- Core Strategy Policy CSP 10 provides for 1 000 homes to be constructed in the villages over the plan period (2008–2026).
- BMBC’s proposed ‘Spatial Strategy and Location of Growth’ contained within section 5 of the Draft Local Plan states that Development in villages will be encouraged where it meets local needs and supports vitality, the local village economy and viability of the local community and that whilst no allocations for this plan period have been put forward in this Local Plan, development may take place in villages where it is allocated through a Neighbourhood Plan; and
- Draft Local Plan Policy LG2 ‘The Location of Growth’ proposes that Development will be allowed in the villages if it is consistent with Green Belt Policy and is necessary for the viability of the settlement and to meet local needs.

In November 2014, BMBC published a document entitled ‘Supplement to Stage 3 of the Green Belt Review’ (the supplement) which has been undertaken across the whole Borough by independent Consulting Engineers ‘ARUP’. Page 8 of the supplement indicates that BMBC’s decision not to release land from the Green Belt for housing purposes in the Western Rural Villages is due to the “poor sustainability credentials of the sites”. However, it is apparent that these comments are made on a general ‘broad brush’ assumption that all of the Western Rural villages have poor Sustainability credentials.

Contrary to the Councils general assumptions, it is a matter of fact from the evidence provided below that, Oxspring, unlike any other Western Rural village it is unique, in that it is a Sustainable village which has inextricable links with the adjoining Principal Town of Penistone, where BMBC has confirmed that the priority for housing growth is to be focussed to meet the housing needs of the Western Rural part of the Borough.

THE EVIDENCE BASE ILLUSTRATING OXSPRING’S SUSTAINABILITY

The Barnsley Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted in December 2000 following an extensive public inquiry conducted by two senior Planning Inspectors, Mr D A Harmston JP, FRICS, DipTP, MRTPI and MR A P Watson B.Sc (Econ), DipTP, FRTPI, MI Mgt

Paragraph 2.8 on Page 6 'Housing' of the Adopted UDP (Volume 13 Western Rural Area) confirms

"... The Western Rural Area will continue to be a significant source of housing land supply centred on those villages which have the capacity in terms of community facilities and infrastructures."

Paragraph 2.13 on page 7 continues

"Generally speaking, the (housing) proposals relate to the larger villages where there are infrastructure and services and it is considered there is still some scope for modest expansion without detriment to the character and form of the settlement."

Paragraph 2.16 sub heading 'Village Hierarchy' confirms the definition of a selected village

"Generally, these are the larger villages which have the range of services and facilities considered sufficient to accommodate a modest level of housing development and where it is not considered that the level of development proposed would adversely affect their character."

UDP Policy 'WR 1' identifies Oxspring as a 'Selected Village' which has the capacity in terms of community facilities, infrastructure and services to accommodate additional housing development.

In addition to the above, paragraph 4.12 on page 22 of the Western Rural Area UDP confirms

"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."

"If in the long term, there is a need to release further land for housing then there is the scope to accommodate additional development..."

Furthermore and importantly, the senior UDP Inspector Mr D A Harmston JP, FRICS, DipTP, MRTPI confirms in paragraph 13.4.219 on page 1201 of his report

"I consider Oxspring is well located in the Community Area for additional housing development. This is particularly so in the light of its relationship to Penistone and the proposed allocation of land for employment at the former Oxspring Sidings (WR8/1)."

Development of the employment site (WR8/1) at the former Oxspring sidings has long since been completed and is now known as the Marrtree Business Park. This Business Park is located immediately opposite the current Draft Barnsley Local Plan Employment site proposal 'P2' (Land North of Sheffield Road – 3.27 ha), which is identified to serve the Employment needs of the Principal Town of Penistone and the surrounding area until the end of the Local plan period in the year 2033, at which time new Employment land may be identified.

Importantly, the distance by road from the Marrtree Business park to the UDP housing allocation 'WR20' which was allocated in Oxspring following the UDP Inspectors recommendation and is now constructed and known locally as 'Fox Fields', is approximately the same distance as that from the current draft Local Plan employment proposal P2, to the Proposed Oxspring Fields Site. Therefore, we believe that the UDP Inspector's comments referred to in paragraph 13.4.219 of his report, are equally relevant to the present day circumstances.

In addition to the raft of firm evidence set out in BMBC's Adopted UDP, YLL instructed Pell Frischmann (recognised as one of the UK's leading firms of Consulting Engineers) to undertake a Sustainability and Accessibility Study of Oxspring. This Study (undertaken and published in January 2015) was compiled jointly with PBP and concludes that Oxspring is a highly sustainable location given its accessibility and connectivity to a wide range of services and facilities. Indeed, the built form of the Principal Town of Penistone adjoins the built form of the Martree Business Park and the Draft Local Plan Employment Site Proposal P2; both of these sites are located in Oxspring. Moreover, the B6462 Sheffield Road which traverses the length of Oxspring is also the Main spine Road into and out of Penistone. No other Western Rural village shares the same physical connectivity with Penistone.

The Trans Pennine Trail, which forms the southern Boundary of the Oxspring Fields site, also provides excellent access to Penistone for those seeking alternative modes of transport to the private car. Penistone Railway Station is only 7 minutes away by bicycle on this safe, flat and dedicated route.

The 'Travel and Transport' page of the Oxspring Parish website (www.oxspring-parish.com/travel) which is operated by OPC confirms:

- A. Oxspring is well connected with good links to both public transport and the national road network;
- B. The nearest train station is only a couple of miles away at Penistone, with direct services to Huddersfield, Barnsley, Meadowhall and Sheffield;

- C. Oxspring is well served by local bus services with direct services to Penistone, Barnsley and Sheffield running on a regular basis; and
- D. Oxspring is close to the motorway network with the M1 being only 10 minutes drive away. For those going westward, then the start of the Woodhead Pass (A628) is again only 10 minutes away

The Parish website also boasts proudly that the village has ‘excellent facilities’ and these include:

- Two Public Houses;
- Post Office, General Store and Off-licence;
- St Aidans Church;
- Village Hall;
- Primary School;
- Sports Field;
- Children’s play area;
- Bower Dell Picnic Area;
- Allotments and Numerous other amenity Spaces

In addition the website also confirms that there are various groups, clubs and community events which take place in the village throughout the year. These include Indoor Bowling, Pilate’s classes, the ‘pop-in’ club and the Oxspring Trunce run e.t.c

In respect of Employment provision, Oxspring is home to two existing business parks:

- The Marrtree Business Park, as referenced earlier, is located adjacent to Sheffield Road in the North Western extent of Oxspring and consists of 6 modern industrial units, ranging in size between 3750 and 4000 Sqft.
- The ‘Wintwire’ Business Park is situated in the floor of the river Don Valley on the site of the historical ‘Winterbottom’ Oxspring Wire Mill and this location also consists of 6 industrial units.

Additionally, when developed, the Draft Barnsley Local Plan Employment Site Proposal ‘P2’ will form the third Business Park in Oxspring and at 3.27 ha, it will certainly be the largest serving Penistone and the Western Rural Area.

In light of the above, we are perplexed why members of OPC and Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan continue to maintain that Oxspring is not a sustainable village;

especially when they cannot provide evidence to substantiate their personal views which are contrary to those expressed by the Senior UDP Inspector and are also clearly at odds with the views expressed on the Parish website!

We are equally perplexed why BMBC will not accept that Oxspring is a Sustainable village which can accommodate additional housing development; particularly considering the weighty evidence base which includes the content of paragraph 4.12 of the adopted UDP, referred to above.

Taking all of the evidence into consideration it is simply ludicrous to suggest that Oxspring, as a western rural village, is not a sustainable location and it is for this reason that such a statement contained within page 8 of the supplement is, in our opinion, unsound.

Whilst sustainability is a key consideration, BMBC in any event acknowledge on page 8 of the supplement that

“The existing undeveloped safeguarded land in the rural west villages which was designated in the Unitary Development plan is being rolled over into the Local Plan. In the event that housing need is indentified in the rural villages in the plan period or beyond, there is capacity to consider allocating these sites to meet that need. This approach accords with the Spatial Strategy of the Local Plan which states that development will be supported in the rural west villages where it is necessary for the viability of the settlement and to meet local needs.”

The PBP letter of 7 October 2015 to Kirkwells Limited explains why circa 96 market and affordable homes are required to meet the needs of the Oxspring until the year 2033. In consideration of the supplement and as matters currently stand, the only site which lies outside of the Green Belt in Oxspring that has the capacity to deliver these recognised housing needs for the Parish is that of ‘SAF 18’ located North and South of Roughbirchworth Lane.

Consequently, if a planning application is submitted for the development of the “SAF18” site, either prior to the adoption of the Barnsley Local Plan or at an appropriate point in the future post the adoption of the Local Plan (including when a 5 year supply of housing land could be demonstrated), then BMBC and Oxspring Parish Council will struggle to resist the site’s development. In such circumstances the proposal would be compliant with BMBC’s Adopted Policy.

For the reasons identified in paragraphs ‘3’ to ‘5.11’ of the PBP Assessment, The only way we foresee that BMBC can refuse planning permission on the “SAF 18” site is if any of the technical issues previously identified render it undevelopable or it is returned to the Green Belt prior to the submission of any planning application for

development upon it. In either case, it is our view that an alternative deliverable development site capable of meeting the recognised housing requirements of Oxspring would need to be identified in its place.

GREEN BELT REVIEW

BMBC has confirmed that it cannot meet its borough wide housing needs to the year 2033 without removing land from the Green Belt.

In 2014, BMBC commissioned 'Arup' to undertake a comprehensive Green Belt Review across the whole of the Borough (the Arup review). This document was published in late 2014 and the Oxspring Fields site was assessed within a much larger parcel of land, consisting of 190.8 ha, identified as 'General Area PEN 11'. Within their assessment of General Area PEN 11, **Importantly**, Arup confirm that:

"The Trans Pennine Trail within a dismantled Railway could represent a strong internal boundary should the area be considered for sub division."

As stated above, the Trans Pennine Trail forms the Southern Boundary of the Oxspring Fields Site.

In December 2014, Landscape Architects Smeeden Foreman were instructed by YLL to evaluate the Arup review. Their comprehensive letter is available to view on the Oxspring Fields website.

On 5 June 2015 PBP wrote to BMBC's Executive Director of Development enclosing a number of annotated photographs concerning the Arup review in this location. **We urge you to read this detailed letter** which is attached at Appendix H of the PBP assessment.

We have now made BMBC aware of our serious and bona-fide concerns regarding the Arup review, which we and our team of professional planning advisers firmly believe has been undertaken utilising a **flawed methodology, and is therefore unsound**, not least because:

1. The Adopted UDP confirms Oxspring as selected village which 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;

2. The Oxspring Fields site scored the highest possible mark as a 'Category 1' deliverable Development Site in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) undertaken by Peter Brett Associates on behalf of BMBC in 2012; and
3. Arup identified within its assessment of General Area PEN 11 that "*The Trans Pennine Trail within a dismantled Railway could represent a strong internal boundary should the area be considered for sub division.*" (*Our Emphasis*)

Despite BMBC's evidence base indicating that 'Oxpring Fields' is a suitable, available, achievable and deliverable development site, bizarrely, it has not been assessed as a resultant parcel in the Arup review, despite Arup's specific statement that it could be considered for sub division. To date, BMBC has failed to instruct Arup to explore this important matter further.

HISTORY OF THE OXSPRING FIELDS PROPOSALS

Finally, we would once again like to reiterate the history of our Oxspring Fields proposals.

During 2013 the Vice Chair of OPC, Mrs Ann Walker (who also now holds the position of joint chair of Oxspring Neighbourhood Plan) approached Mr John Wade¹ to ask him, if through his extensive knowledge of Oxspring, he was aware of an alternative site, to the then proposed housing site, Reference 'LD10' (Land North and South of Roughbirchworth Lane – 111 houses – Site Area 5.10 ha) which was of a suitable size to meet Oxspring's housing needs.

Mr Wade has always been a very active member of the Parish and is well informed of local issues. Over many years, Mr Wade has welcomed new development into Oxspring and in fact, Mrs Walker lives in a home within the 'Fox Fields' development, which was brought forward by YLL and constructed by David Wilson Homes. At that time, In his capacity as both a Borough and Parish Councillor, Mr Wade strongly supported this development, which at the time of construction and marketing, was advertised as a 'development of Executive Homes'. Clearly Mrs Walker finds Oxspring and the Executive 'Fox Fields' Development a suitable location in which to reside.

¹ Mr John Wade is one of the oldest residents of Oxspring who has lived within the village since birth. Mr Wade spent over 40 years of his life in public office including as a Parish, District, Town and Barnsley Borough Councillor. We are aware that during his time in public life he has held a number of key positions.

Mr Wade arranged for the Chair and Vice Chair of Oxspring Parish Council to meet with ourselves to discuss the 'Oxspring Fields' proposals, as an alternative to site reference 'LD10' off Roughbirchworth Lane which was proposed for 111 dwellings. At that time, both the Chair and Vice Chair were content with our 'Oxspring Fields' proposals and In fact, the Vice Chair specifically asked that we consider including a number of bungalows within any proposed development mix, to meet the needs of any existing Oxspring residents wishing to scale down from a larger home, but remain within the vicinity of the village.

We fail to understand why some residents, who have moved into Oxspring in recent years, are now attempting to prevent others from doing so. We find their 'NIMBY' views entirely selfish and hypocritical and their actions are stifling the delivery of long desired community benefits and the identified housing needs of the Parish across all tenures, including Affordable, for the less fortunate and those searching for their first home.

YLL remains resolute and committed to delivering the Oxspring Fields development.

Yours faithfully
YORKSHIRE LAND Limited

Steven Green
Managing Director