

Consultation Response to Stainton and Thornton Draft Neighbourhood Plan Consultation (June 2021)

Introduction

This response to the Stainton and Thornton Draft Neighbourhood Plan consultation is being provided on behalf of Here for You Hospitality Ltd (hereafter “HFYH”) who are the landowners of the Sporting Lodge Hotel and land to the rear (see figure 1).

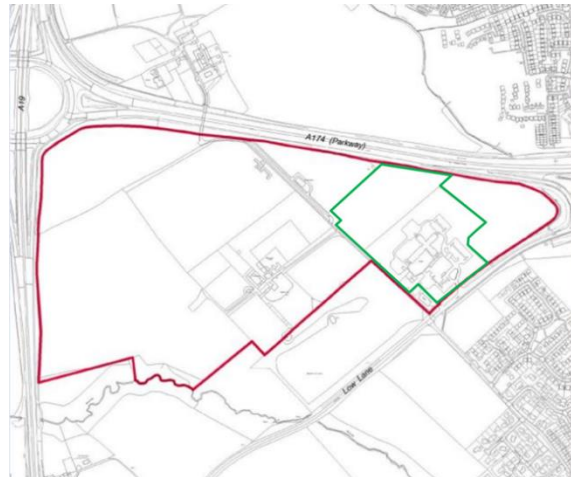


Figure 1: Extent of respondent's ownership (shown in green) in relation to Stainton Vale Farm proposed allocation (shown in red)

The wider site is referred to as ‘Stainton Vale Farm’ and had the status of a draft housing allocation during the most recent consultations on the emerging Local Plan (policy reference H3.18) being considered suitable for approximately 500 homes.

The wider site falls within the ownership of three main parties. It is important to note that the Sporting Lodge Hotel and land to the rear is available and deliverable for residential development in isolation; it benefits from direct access onto Low Lane and it does not rely on the delivery of the land in third party ownership. Here for You Hospitality are nevertheless collaborating with the adjacent landowners who are also committed to delivering a comprehensive masterplanned development scheme across the whole of the land area.

This consultation response is structured by section headings which correspond with the specific chapters within the Stainton and Thornton Draft Neighbourhood Plan Submission Document (June 2021). Below these we have made both comments and requested changes to the document.

Chapter 1 (Introduction)

Comments:

We would like to start by saying that we fully support the Neighbourhood Plan. The Sporting Lodge Hotel business and its associated facilities has served the local community for several years. The landowner, HFYH therefore have an investment in the community and our aspiration is to ensure that the hotel site and surrounding land is managed and developed in a way which meets local needs.

Chapter 7 (Plan Vision and Objectives)

Comments:

We fully endorse the objective to achieve the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development and the aspirations to secure a strong and competitive economy whilst planning positively for housing within the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Chapter 8 (Green Infrastructure)

Comments:

We support the Neighbourhood Plan's aspirations to expand and improve Green Infrastructure within the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The land at Stainton Vale Farm is predominantly farmland, which is largely inaccessible to the public. If the site goes forward as a proposed housing allocation in the Local Plan this would be for a relatively low-density development scheme set within a landscaped environment, which would deliver a considerable amount of public open space. This should significantly expand the network of publicly accessible Green Infrastructure within the Neighbourhood Plan Area, which in turn will help to support health and wellbeing, enhance biodiversity and deliver the numerous other benefits set out within this section.

We support policy ST1 for similar reasons. The aspiration to improve the connectivity between green spaces is supported. The development of Stainton Vale Farm has the potential to improve links from the rest of the village to Stainton Low Wood and to improve the footpath connections towards Stainsby to the north.

In relation to the statement about prioritizing brownfield land, we understand the benefits of developing previously developed land for new housing. However, such sites are often not available, deliverable or economically viable (for example, due to the costs associated with land remediation). Some greenfield sites will therefore be required to meet the diversity of housing types required to meet local housing need. For example, this includes the delivery of affordable housing and housing in areas of higher demand.

Nevertheless, the Sporting Lodge Hotel has underused car parking and loading yards which constitute previously developed land and their redevelopment as part of a wider housing allocation along with a local centre would accord with the brownfield land aspiration.

We support the proposals to designate Stainton Low Wood as a Local Green Space. This can be effectively integrated into a wider allocation of Stainton Vale Farm and could also be expanded and enhanced as part of the development scheme.

We also support the wording of policy ST3. The development of Stainton Vale Farm would accord with this policy by preserving important landscape features, including hedgerows and trees within a layout, whilst providing expansive areas of open space which would be managed to enhance biodiversity. Regarding the maintenance of green buffer zones to prevent coalescence, this can also be delivered within the layout.

Requested Changes:

- We would request that the Neighbourhood Plan acknowledges that some greenfield sites are likely to be required to meet the local development requirements, plus to deliver other benefits

such as community infrastructure and public open space and acknowledges the potential challenges associated with relying wholly upon brownfield sites to meet the Borough's development needs.

- Figure 4 will in due course need to be updated for consistency with the emerging Middlesbrough Local Plan. In line with our representations to the emerging Local Plan, we would request that the Green Wedge shown in figure 4 is reduced to the areas surrounding and south of the Stainton Beck, (i.e. the approach taken in the most recent publication version of the emerging Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Plan). The remaining balance of the former Green Wedge could be delivered as a housing allocation whilst retaining the reduced Green Wedge area for the benefits it delivers. The Stainton Vale Farm site can include green infrastructure buffers (for example south of the A174) which along with the highways network will prevent any potential coalescence with Stainsby Farm to the north.

Chapter 10 (Community Assets)

Comments:

We support the aspiration to expand upon the range of community facilities within the village to meet local needs. The Sporting Lodge Site is suitable for being upgraded to a Neighbourhood / Local Centre, which could expand upon the existing facilities on site. For example, this could include a local convenience store, a Doctor's Surgery and recreational facilities (e.g. a community orchard or outdoor pool and play area). The development of the wider site at Stainton Vale Farm would help to fund and deliver such services.

We also support the Sporting Lodge being included as a protected community asset under policy ST5. However, as set out in the requested changes below, we would request that this is restricted to the Old Poste House and Sporting Facilities, as it is understood these are the main facilities of community benefit, rather than the Hotel.

Requested Changes:

- We request a change to the wording of policy ST5 (Community Assets) that the inclusion of the Sporting Lodge in the list of protected community assets is reworded as 'The Old Poste House and Sporting Lodge Leisure Facilities' so this is more specific.

Chapter 13 (Service/Schools/Shops/Unicorn Centre/Larchfield)

Comments:

We understand that a village shop has been lost in recent years and that there is a desire to protect and to expand existing facilities. The Sporting Lodge is identified as a valued site and as discussed above, there may be scope to expand upon existing services and facilities offer to provide a Neighbourhood / Local Centre, which could be delivered as part and parcel of a wider development of the site and surrounding land.

We therefore support the wording of policy ST8 and the vision we are promoting for Stainton Vale Farm accords well with the objectives set out within this chapter.

Our intention is to retain and hopefully expand upon the fitness facilities at the Sporting Lodge.

Chapter 14 (Design Principles)

Comments:

The aspirations relating to housing mix as set out within policy ST9 are noted. A benefit of the land at Stainton Vale Farm is that it is capable of delivering a wide range of housing types including affordable tenures, lifetime homes and bungalows.

Requested Changes:

- We would request that the second sentence within point 7 within draft policy ST9 is rephrased along the following lines: *‘Proposals which would result in an unacceptable degree of coalescence of Stainton and Thornton with other areas of greater Middlesbrough and surrounding urban areas should be resisted in order to maintain the rural village feel. Developments should retain green buffers and utilise the existing highways network where appropriate to help to provide separation between the village and the edge of the town’.*

The reason for this requested change is that the current phrasing of the policy as ‘further coalescence’ is insufficiently flexible and it is not specific in locational terms. As currently worded, the policy may have the effect of precluding all types of development which are located within any gaps between the existing built-up areas of the village and the urban edge. A scheme to develop housing and a local centre at land around the Sporting Lodge would in a strict sense result in a degree of coalescence with land to the north at Stainsby; however, this can be masterplanned carefully to ensure that the rural feel and separate identity of Stainton are preserved. There are more prescriptive and specific controls set within draft policy ST10 (point 9) to avoid coalescence in the key areas of concern around Thornton and Hemlington Grange and these are supported.

Chapter 15 [New Developments on Green Field Sites, (Rate of New Builds / Density / Landscaping / Green Corridors)]

Comments:

In relation to the statement of prioritising previously developed land for the delivery of new housing, for the reasons discussed above in relation to chapter 8, some greenfield sites are almost certainly going to be required to deliver the diversity of housing needs of the Borough and the Parish.

Extracts from the Landscape and Heritage Assessment (MBC Local Plan Review 2016) have been included in a green text box within this chapter. In relation to ‘Parcel 21 Stainton Vale’ it states that *‘there are housing allocations at Stainton on the south side of the B1380, and there is potential for the separate identity of Stainton to be further eroded if this site is developed’.* We disagree with this statement because there is no reason why a scheme cannot be carefully planned in a way which avoids such impacts, including the provision of a wide separation buffer delivered as green infrastructure. The A174 is also a substantial dual carriageway, which helps to separate the Parish of Stainton from Stainsby.

Policy ST10 includes the following paragraph:

‘As part of any future major development of the parish, the development of community, retail, sports and leisure facilities would be supported at an appropriate scale. In the case of the Sporting Lodge which offers excellent amenity for the community, the retention of sports and leisure facilities on this site would be supported. Community buildings and facilities are needed to provide the growing population with local needs and activities.’

HFYH are committed to retaining and enhancing community facilities on the Sporting Lodge site as discussed in greater detail above in relation to chapters 10 and 13.

Chapter 16 (Developer Contributions and Planning Obligations)

Comments:

Policy ST11 refers to a priority list of community infrastructure projects in appendix 9, which among other things include: improvements to rights of way, a new multi-purpose community open space, environmental improvements to green spaces and the provision of enhanced meeting spaces for residents.

HFYH’s vision for the Sporting Lodge site harmonizes well with the aspirations set out within this chapter of the draft Neighbourhood Plan. The intention is to deliver open space and facilities as part of the delivery of a wider masterplan in the wider vicinity of the Sporting Lodge.

Chapter 17 (Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency)

Comments:

We support the Neighbourhood Plan's approach to encouraging sustainable energy generation and resource use.

We are currently investigating the potential for the delivery of electric vehicle charging at the Sporting Lodge Hotel site which should accord well with the objectives in this chapter.

Policy ST12 suggests that the inclusion of renewable and energy efficiency systems will only be sought for small scale housing developments. However, arguably larger scale developments are just as capable of delivering such technologies (if not more so) and this ought to be encouraged.

Concluding Comments

HFYH support the vision and objectives set out within the draft Neighbourhood Plan. Subject to the small number of requested changes being made which are outlined within this consultation response, the Neighbourhood Plan has our full support.

HFYH's longer term vision for the Sporting Lodge hotel and the Stainton Vale Farm proposed allocation area also accords well with the Neighbourhood Plan and we would like to continue to work in close collaboration with the local community going forward.

Rob Preston MRTPI, Carter Jonas, 10th August 2021