

Mr Greg Archer,
Development Services,
Planning Reception,
Gloucester House,
72 Church Road,
Stockton-on-Tees,
TS18 1TW

7th August 2012
Our Ref: 120/11/RH

Dear Mr Archer,

**OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ON LAND AT MORLEY CARR FARM,
WEST YARM - 12/0980/OUT**

APPLICANT:- TAYLOR WIMPEY(NORTH YORKSHIRE) LTD

I write with reference to the above-mentioned planning application and in particular the recent comments of the Morley Carr Action Group (dated 3rd August 2012).

We are of the opinion that the comments made on the matters of the position of the HSE, the safety of the proposed access arrangements and the Council's position in respect of the supply of deliverable housing land are incorrect.

The Council's own Professional Officers and the HSE will of course provide you with their considered opinion on each of these matters, as we have already expressed our professional views through the course of the consideration of this application. However, we feel it is prudent to comment on a number of points raised to avoid ambiguity at the forthcoming Planning Committee meeting.

High Pressure Gas Pipeline

As confirmed in the response of the Health & Safety Executive of the 3rd August 2012, subject to the imposition of restrictive planning conditions requiring the upgrading of the HPGM to thick walled pipe at the appropriate time, the HSE do not advise against the proposals.

The restrictive conditions allow residential development (housing) to be constructed and occupied across the site, apart from within 135m of the pipeline, prior to the upgrading of the pipeline. Based on the illustrative proposals this amounts to an unencumbered developable area of around 8.2ha (excluding POS & SUDS Ponds). Based on an average density of around 26dph this amounts to around 213 dwellings.

Moreover, the HSE's suggested condition (Condition B in particular) allow for the provision indoor & outdoor community uses within 65 – 135m of the pipeline.

England & Lyle Limited

Directors: J. R. England MBE, BA(Hons), PhD, DipTP, MRTPI I. H. Lyle BSc(Hons), MPhil, MRTPI J.J.A. Good BA(Hons), DipTP, MRTPI

Registered Address: Gateway House (as above)

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The Morley Carr Action Group suggest that development taking place on the site is dependant on the upgrading works of the pipe. With respect this is not the case. The majority of the development applied for can be constructed and occupied prior to the upgrade works starting and being completed. The HPGM does not provide a constraint that would prevent development commencing on the site.

Taylor Wimpey, subject to appropriate Reserved Matters Consent and discharge of all relevant conditions, would look to commence development on the site at the earliest opportunity.

The exact scope of works for the upgrading of the pipeline will be agreed with the HSE and National Grid with the works being carried out by National Grid approved contractors in line with best industry practice.

Traffic/Roads

Junction Design

The proposed junctions have been designed in accordance with the appropriate standards by Taylor Wimpey's professional highway consultants in consultation with the Council's professional Highway Officers.

Footpath/Cycleway Improvements

The proposals will result in significant improvements in the local pedestrian and cycle network to the benefit of the wider community.

Yarm Car Parking

The Morley Carr Action group are correct that drivers looking for car parking spaces hinders the free flow of traffic along Yarm High Street. The proposals, similar to other recent approved developments in the locality, will provide a significant contribution towards the provision of additional parking spaces within and around the Town Centre to assist. Notably the additional spaces will be provided off the High Street to alleviate the issue of parking related manoeuvres and waiting for spaces on the High Street itself.

5 Year Housing Land Supply

Empty Homes

The Morley Carr Action Group suggest that by bringing empty homes back into use will contribute to the 5 year deliverable housing land supply across the Borough.

Officers will be fully aware that Policy 28 (Gross & Net Dwelling Provision) of the Regional Spatial Strategy (upon which the adopted Stockton Core Strategy and the emerging Regeneration & Environment DPD housing requirements are based) seeks to improve the existing housing stock '*where sufficient demand exists*' though an integrated package of measures to continue residential use of existing dwellings as well as requiring additions to the dwelling stock across the Borough.

Empty homes are simply part and parcel of the private housing market. Indeed Policy 28 accepts that there will be vacant properties within an area - its aim is to reduce or maintain vacancy rates at or below 3% of the total stock. As indicated in the policy, the use of existing stock it is very much a matter of whether sufficient demand exists for those properties. A key driver of vacancy is the limited demand for housing in certain market areas. Withholding planning permission elsewhere will not resolve this issue.

The issue of empty properties in the Affordable Housing Market is dependent on the availability of funding for refurbishment and ongoing maintenance.

Notwithstanding this, it is made explicit at 3.86 of the RSS that:-

***'As well as** improving and replacing some existing dwellings, the **RSS aims to accommodate concurrently additions to the dwelling stock.** The level of additional dwellings has been influenced by housing market restructuring; the locational strategy; availability of previously developed land; and the economic and demographic and housing model projections developed by the Assembly and One North East.'*

At 3.90 the RSS also states:-

'The net additional dwelling provision considers the reduction in requirements through using the existing stock more efficiently to reduce vacancy rates to at or below 3% by 2011'.

In short, the net housing requirements (**net additions** to the stock of housing) for the Borough, and throughout the North East, have been made on the assumption of the efficient use of the existing dwellings. Additional homes being brought back into use is therefore entirely in line with the projections and in no way reduces the net dwelling provision requirement. It therefore has nil effect on the deliverable supply of housing land across the Borough for net additions to the dwelling stock.

Additional Permissions

The MCFAG are questioning whether the Council resolving to grant planning permission for a greater number of units at the Allens West site will have an impact upon the deliverable supply over the next 5 years. Notwithstanding that permission has yet to be issued, the annual output per year on a site of 500 dwellings or 845 dwellings will be the same however the supply over the longer term will of course be greater.

The contribution of additional permissions, large sites or small (if solid evidence of delivery), granted since the 1st April 2012, must be weighed against the delivery of new homes since that point in time

The Council cannot, under any circumstances, demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliver housing land as required by the NPPF. The proposals, as explained throughout our submissions, must be considered in accordance with the 'presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development' and the tests set out at Paragraph 14 of the NPPF.

It remains our firm view, which is endorsed by numerous recent appeal decisions, that when considered in the appropriate context, the proposals are wholly compliant with the aims, objectives and detail of the National Planning Policy Framework and represent truly sustainable development which will result in significant socio-economic benefits for the Borough. Moreover, and most importantly, there **are absolutely no matters that significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of granting planning permission in this instance, this simply delivering housing on one of the Council's Phase 1 Preferred Housing Sites to meet an immediate shortfall in housing.** Planning permission must therefore be granted without delay.

We trust that Members will be provided with appropriate advice on the matters raised by the Morley Carr Action Group and accordingly no weight can be given to their incorrect objections.

As always, should you wish to discuss any aspect of the proposals please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

R Hall

Russell Hall BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

Principal Planner