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Our ref: SSB/JW/LMD

14th September 2020

Dear Sirs,

Representation upon the Cassop-cum-Quarrington Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2035 Pre-Submission Draft – March 2020

This representation has been prepared by Strutt & Parker on behalf of Johnson Brothers. It is made in relation to approximately 340 acres of land owned by the Johnsons in and around Old Quarrington as indicated on the plan below.



Quarrington Farm Boundaries

The Johnsons appreciate the considerable effort that has gone into the research and preparation of the plan, which clearly demonstrates a desire to see the locality thrive and enjoy a well planned and balanced natural and built environment that offers something for all.



Having read the current draft of the Neighbourhood Plan we would like to make the Parish Council aware of their desire to promote land at Quarrington Farm through the Local Plan for the purposes of creating a new standalone settlement. It is envisaged that this would embrace the vision of the Garden Village movement in that it would not only create a high quality and appealing living environment but also offer places of employment and recreation. It is from this vantage point that we would be grateful if the steering group could consider the following comments.

1. It is the role of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) to focus on the no-strategic planning issues that are entirely specific to the locality within the defined area whilst allowing the focus on larger scale strategic planning policy matters to be determined by Durham County Council as Local Planning Authority. In this the NP is largely successful in that it does not seek to specify the role the Parish would play in meeting specific housing, employment or other needs in the form of built development now or in the future. This approach is supported, particularly in light of emerging review of national planning policy and implementation as a consequence of reforms outlined in the White Paper recently published by MHCLG “Planning for the Future” where there may be significant changes to regional planning provisions at a stage rather earlier than might have originally been envisaged when the emerging Local Plan was being prepared.
2. Draft Policy CCQ1 proposes a Protected Rural Setting (PRS) to the defined area shown in the accompanying Policies Map 1 in recognition of the value that this area plays in defining the rural character of the locality. The NP suggests that development will not be supported that leads to a reduction in the open character of this land and diminish its role in maintaining the separateness of settlements. The vision we have for our proposed development is such that it too would benefit from being entirely separate and distinct from the surrounding settlements. Furthermore, such development would also benefit from maintaining a largely rural and attractive setting. As some of our land is within the designated PRS it is considered important that any proposals in the PRS are viewed in a balanced manner whereby any development that might potentially be viewed as encroaching on openness might be weighed against the benefits that the wider scheme might generate in the form of enhancements to the natural environment and accessibility to enjoy it. We are firmly of the opinion that a well designed development can readily be integrated within the aspirations and vision of this Draft Policy.
3. Linked with the above, paragraph 6.22 makes reference to the fact that the NP “consciously seeks to safeguard the rural settings of the main settlements from further outwards spread of development”. We understand the desire to prevent the sprawl of existing settlements but at a national and county level there remains an acute recognition of the need to create more housing and generate growth. We suggest that simply making a statement that there should be a focus on re-development of brown field or infill opportunities does not in itself make it happen as there will always be a finite supply and many such sites have a number of significant drawbacks to overcome. We would therefore suggest that by seeking to develop a standalone scheme this can achieve the combined goals of securing housing supply and growth while avoiding further incremental urban sprawl.
4. The only proposed designated Local Green Space and Locally Valued Heritage Asset that would be impacted in any way by our proposal might be the route of the proposed Clarence Railway (Policies Maps 2(12) and 3(4)) which passes across part of the land to the western end. Again, it is envisaged that the nature of any development proposed can readily embrace, and even enhance, the protection of this heritage asset within the context of a wider development.
5. The Johnsons are particularly aligned with the aspirations of Policy CCQ4 around the creation of beautiful and successful development. It is very much the intention to attribute considerable weight to the matter of place making in any proposed scheme to materially enhance the experience of residents, workers and visitors alike. The desire to instil a “sense of delight and wellbeing” is laudable as is the

wish to create positive character and identity. This is very much part of our vision but in appraising any scheme it must always be remembered that while such goals are realised as a consequence of visionary and coherent design they invariably have some financial implications to the development which can sometimes be difficult to reconcile. The NP must therefore encourage a holistic approach to this subject, particularly when considering d) of CCQ4, to allow a carefully considered balance to be achieved by a developer, the Parish Council and the Local Planning Authority to avoid broad brush application of some policies thwarting the benefits aimed for in others. The aforementioned White Paper places a greater emphasis moving forward on the quality of the built environment being created and we question whether the NP might do well to offer a more specific form of wording to draw specific links to the pending Design Codes envisage by MHCLG.

We hope that any revisions proposed to the NP prior to submission can embrace some of the thoughts expressed above.

Yours faithfully,

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Director