

**Climate change**

The very first page of the Local Development Plan should refer to the overriding need to make provision for climate change. The recent IPCC Report advises that an extraordinary revolution is required in the profligacy which abounds in all walks of life if we are to avoid catastrophe. The next 12 years are critical they advise, so enormous change will have to be achieved within the life of the next Local Development Plan.

How the Local Development Plan should reflect the greatest challenge mankind has faced is moot and preparing the plan in these circumstances is a huge responsibility. Matters may become clearer as attention shifts as it surely must do from Brexit to climate change. I hope you may have a better idea but all I can suggest is that the Plan must be endowed with the flexibility to encourage and facilitate whatever is required.

**Allanton: Provision of Housing Land**

This representation argues that there should be some allocation of housing land in Allanton.

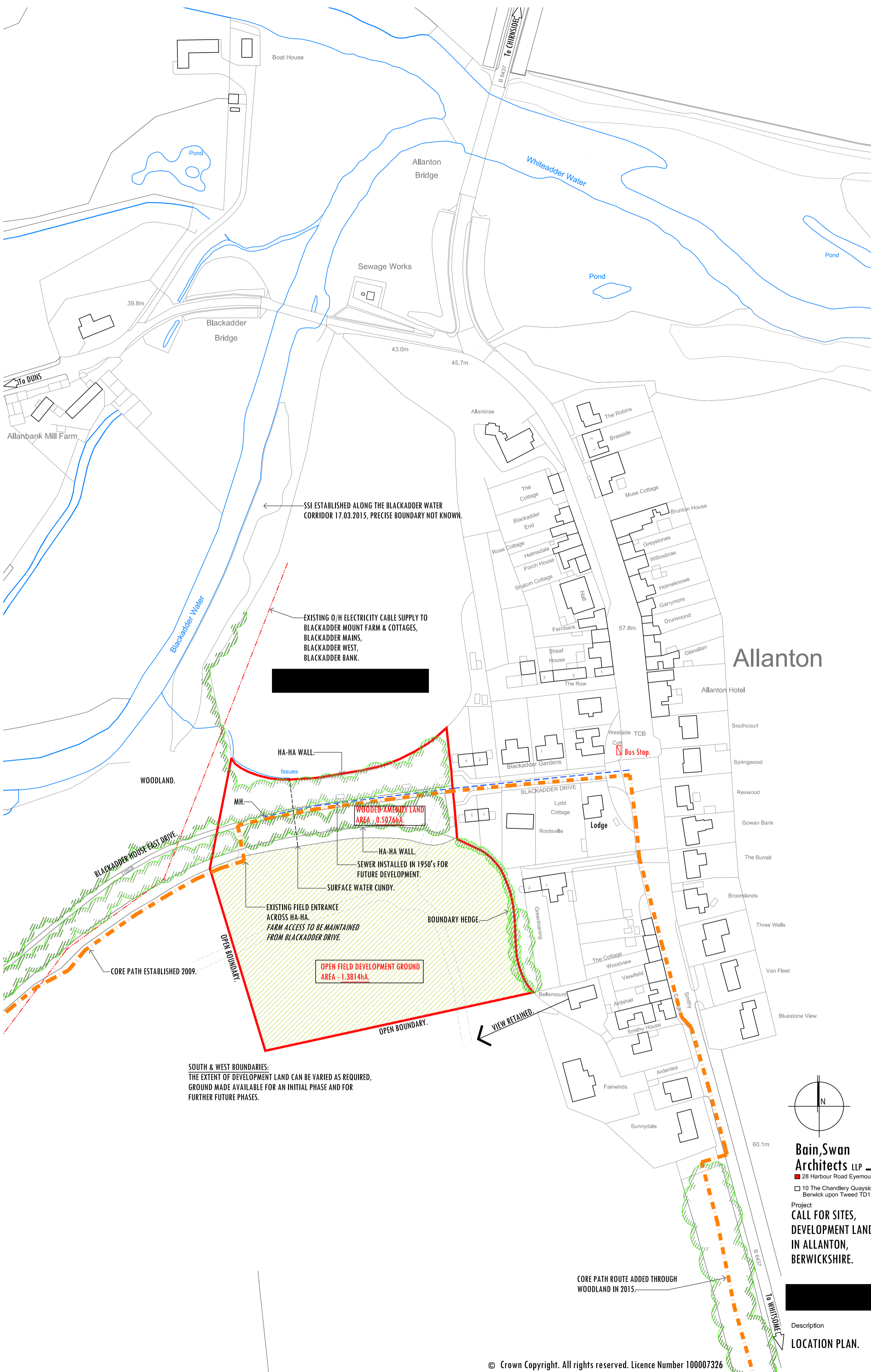
We believe it is important that all Berwickshire villages should have the capacity for some growth, not least for affordable housing for young families to offset demographic trends. Demand is often latent, only emerging when there is the concrete possibility of housing. If we do not allow the addition of a few houses in Berwickshire villages they will die. You have recognised this - the majority have some allocation so it is unfair for Allanton to miss out.

In the Call for Sites process we submitted for your consideration land owned by [REDACTED] to the west of the village. We pointed out what we regarded as shortcomings in your Assessment Conclusions in our submission 2.8.17 and we attach these again as part of this response.

We particularly want to point out that the proposed site would not threaten the historic pattern of the village plan; development here would be on the axis that created it - the umbilical cord to Blackadder House. Tucked away from the main street it would not impact directly on the Conservation Area and far from being destructive of the designed landscape, with good design it would provide the catalyst to revive and strengthen it.

We would request that you review your conclusions, particularly those which have to do with village form which seem to us to lack an appreciation of the ways in which Berwickshire villages have grown organically in the past.

The land offered is quite large in area but a smaller site could easily be made available. One which could accommodate say 5-6 houses with provision for future expansion would surely be appropriate. If this sort of number could be accommodated within your overall LDP target it would provide for the future of the village in line with the provision made within the Local Development Plan for the majority of other Berwickshire villages.



To DUNS

To CHIRNSIDE

# Allanton

39.8m  
43.0m  
45.7m

SSI ESTABLISHED ALONG THE BLACKADDER WATER CORRIDOR 17.03.2015, PRECISE BOUNDARY NOT KNOWN.

EXISTING O/H ELECTRICITY CABLE SUPPLY TO BLACKADDER MOUNT FARM & COTTAGES, BLACKADDER MAINS, BLACKADDER WEST, BLACKADDER BANK.



HA-HA WALL

Issues

MH

WOODEN AMENITY LAND AREA - 0.5076ha

HA-HA WALL

SEWER INSTALLED IN 1950'S FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT.

SURFACE WATER CUNDY.

EXISTING FIELD ENTRANCE ACROSS HA-HA. FARM ACCESS TO BE MAINTAINED FROM BLACKADDER DRIVE.

OPEN FIELD DEVELOPMENT GROUND AREA - 1.3814ha

BOUNDARY HEDGE

BLACKADDER HOUSE EAST DRIVE

CORE PATH ESTABLISHED 2009.

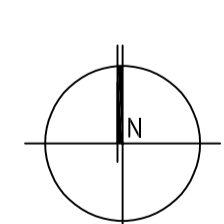
OPEN BOUNDARY

OPEN BOUNDARY

VIEW RETAINED

SOUTH & WEST BOUNDARIES: THE EXTENT OF DEVELOPMENT LAND CAN BE VARIED AS REQUIRED, GROUND MADE AVAILABLE FOR AN INITIAL PHASE AND FOR FURTHER FUTURE PHASES.

CORE PATH ROUTE ADDED THROUGH WOODLAND IN 2015.



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Project  
**CALL FOR SITES, DEVELOPMENT LAND IN ALLANTON, BERWICKSHIRE.**

Drawn by **JRB**  
 Checked by  
 Scale 1:1250  
 Date Aug 201

Job No **528**  
 Drawing No

Description  
**LOCATION PLAN.**

Revision **A**

## Response Note

on

### Initial Assessment Summary ref AA LLA 01

#### Land west of Blackadder Farm, Allanton

Bain, Swan Architects 2.8.2017

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The conclusions indicated in the previous assessment 5.12.2016 are noted.

You state that there are more suitable housing /mixed use opportunities within the wider Berwickshire Housing Market Area and no doubt there are. But your conclusions do seem to be somewhat flimsy as though you had made up your mind and needed some standard objections. From my client's point of view they come over as rather dismissive of his efforts to put forward the ground for development in response to your request. We therefore provide the submission again and make the following comments.

1. Site capacity

The area of the site is 1.381 ha. (which is negotiable) with additional wooded area of 0.5ha. At say 30 dph this would produce a capacity of 41 units. If built out in total this site would make a significant contribution to the Council's housing target. However, we would emphasise that these numbers are negotiable: 41 houses may be thought to be too many and phasing is thought to be appropriate, as described below.

2. Phasing

The boundaries shown on drawing L01 are open boundaries and are to an extent arbitrary. It is not envisaged that 41 units are likely to be marketable all at once, and if built in a single phase there would be a danger of psychologically overwhelming the village. Small numbers of additional houses can on the other hand be thoroughly energising for a village so it is envisaged the housing layout will provide for successive phases to produce marketable numbers and to manage the modest demand associated with all rural development. The precise arrangements are open to negotiation and could be explored if the Council were minded to include the site in the Local Development Plan.

3. Fit with village development pattern

You say that development would not be consistent with Allanton's 'linear development pattern'. Presumably you consider that Allanton's main street determines the size of the village for all time and cannot be added to. This is to overlook the natural organic growth of most Berwickshire villages which started as one street and expanded around and along secondary streets. Why cannot Allanton follow this time honoured pattern?

It also overlooks the fact that historically Blackadder Drive (as its name suggests) is an important axis. Allanton is an estate village with strong historical connections with the 19C Blackadder House and its estate and the designed landscape along the East Drive which originally terminated at the lodge on Main Street speaks of the very raison d'être of the village. Blackadder House is demolished now and the designed landscape of the East Drive is in decline but well into the 20C this was the village's umbilical cord to the estate.

The village street pattern has already taken in the village end of the original East Drive in the form of the existing cul de sac at Blackadder Drive established in the later 20C.

It is therefore a perfectly reasonable and fitting that this historic and organisational axis should support 21C expansion, indeed a fitting one.

4. Ancient woodland/designed landscape

Established by the Blackadder Estate the ancient woodland and designed landscape is now in decline having lost its purpose with the passing of the house. Your assessment gets it the wrong way round. New development need not threaten it; the open space and recreational possibilities it affords can be used to revive it, preventing its otherwise inevitable decline and disappearance. This is why the area of woodland north of the development site is included on drawing L1A. The extent of woodland can be varied by negotiation.

Another pointer to this process in the establishment of a Core Public Footpath (see A4 drawing) by [REDACTED]. Establishing a development of say up to 20 houses or so opens up the possibility of a linked woodland management arrangement to confer a sense of ownership of the adjoining open space to residents. What better way would there be of securing the longevity of the landscape asset which adjoins the site than by this kind of initiative.

5. Agricultural land

It is true the site is good agricultural land, but this has not in itself been a barrier to allocating other land for development in the Local Development Plan.

6. Impact on character and integrity of Listed Buildings and Conservation Area

Your assessment of the impact on the 17 Listed buildings and the Conservation Area is puzzling: you surely cannot have been to the site.

The site is about as detached and separate from the main street as it is possible to be. It would operate as a separate enclave and would not be directly juxtaposed visually or psychologically with the buildings in the main street. Assuming an appropriate pattern, scale and grain why should a manifestly 21C development not exist happily along the historic link to Blackadder House on the western flank of the village? This pattern of expansion would in essence be no different from a host of other village expansions.

The addition of say 20 or so households would help sustain the village and the Listed buildings in it by supporting the village pub, the Allanton Inn.

7. Effectiveness with Local Development Plan period.

It is appreciated that sites where early development can be anticipated are attractive in terms of achieving your targets. Our guess is that the economic climate is such that these sites are few in number. At Allanton, as in most small rural housing sites it is chicken and egg. It is unrealistic to expect serious interest from developers until the site is allocated for housing, and speculative design work is problematic without planning certainty. It would be a pity if rural settlements missed out on the chance for development because the Council wanted the certainty of advanced arrangements with developers that is probably only available for sites in the larger towns in the Central Borders.

## Housing in the Countryside Policy: suggested improvements

It is reasonable that we should have a "Housing in the Countryside" policy for preventing proliferation of development. We should however remember that in our lifetime the countryside has become substantially depopulated. It is necessary for people to live in the countryside, to care for it and psychologically inhabit it - preventing its alienation from the larger towns. Many parts of the Borders countryside are capable of absorbing individual houses without harm - providing they are well designed into their contexts.

The building group mechanism is a good one in principle. However difficulties arise from the definition of building groups and the criteria which control their suitability to absorb development.

The starting point is that for there to be a building group it has to have a sense of place - *"the existence of a group will be identifiable by its sense of place"*. The phrase "sense of place" implies qualitative judgement - of the senses, that is, it is not wholly defined by objective or measurable criteria. At bottom it has to do with a perceived special distinction between "here" and "there". And of course there are hierarchies of scale: you can have "here" and "there" within one room as well as within a landscape. The policy makes "a sense of place" fundamental - *"in all cases the existence of a "sense of place" will be the primary consideration"*.

I think this is the correct approach. But the trouble starts when the policy introduces definition. It says *"a sense of place will be contributed to by material boundaries like water courses, trees, landform or manmade boundaries like buildings, roads, plantations or means of enclosure"*. No doubt the intention is defensive: something finite and easily understandable is needed to hold the line.

However, the words *"will be contributed to"* are open to interpretation in the sense the wording accepts that these items will not necessarily fully define the sense of place. This is often the case. But too often they are taken as inviolate lines on the ground from which there can be no deviation. This can run counter to a proper appreciation of the sense of place of the group.

Consider the approach to an isolated farm steading where the buildings straddle the road. The road is not a division which produces two distinct groups. Rather they are sub groups of a definitive whole and the key distinction is between the buildings and the landscape: the most meaningful "here" and "there" is the whole steading versus the wider countryside.

Clearly it is easier to administer the policy if it has measurable criteria. No doubt this was their attraction. It is just that the measurable criteria don't always tell the full story and indeed if relied upon exclusively can wrongly block consent for a scheme which if judged qualitatively in relation to the core "sense of place" criterion ought to have complied.

Another criterion which is not written in a definitive manner, presumably to leave room for judgement, is *"sites should not normally break into undeveloped fields"*. This is one that in the public's eyes is unevenly applied. I have noted that applicants think there is a contradiction between the requirements that *"New development shall be contained by that sense of place"* and the requirement that *"new housing is encouraged to locate within or adjacent to building groups"*.

Examined forensically the text of the policy does leave some room for interpretation. But in our experience it is nearly always the measurable criteria, the ones which are meant to help in the identification of a group which are used to the exclusion of a proper appreciation of the spacial dynamics of a building group, its resultant sense of place and how an additional house or houses may be satisfactorily grafted on to the group.

It is a truism that when adding houses to a group and its sense of place every design problem is different and therefore not universally susceptible to a list of largely two dimensional criteria. The skills that are relevant are architectural ones concerned with the three dimensional design so it follows that these skills are needed when interpreting the policy. Sometimes they are absent. Not many planning officers have the architectural skills needed.

In our opinion the current policy is a severe irritant to applicants: they see it as very unevenly applied and this results in bad feeling bringing the planning process into disrepute - which is not in the best interests of SBC.

The policy should put design at its heart. . It is astonishing that it gets no mention. The building group/sense of place criteria should be key criterion, and it ought to be coupled with a requirement for strong architectural design which properly respects the spacial dynamics and character of the group. The wording should make clear the primacy of this objective (it could refer to your SPG "Placemaking and Design") over the objective guidance on boundaries etc. The latter ought to be considerations but not necessarily overriding ones.

Sure, this approach would be more difficult to administer: it involves the deployment of rounder architectural appreciation rather than box ticking. But it would focus the effort on achieving more satisfactory design outcomes, hopefully raising the standard of the product of the current policy, and it would serve the countryside better.

**Housing in the Countryside Policy: isolated houses of exceptional quality**

Paras. 5.10 and 5.14 refer to a possible amendment to the “Housing in the Countryside” policy could be amended to allow support for isolated houses in the countryside provided they are of exceptional design quality.

I think many parts of the Borders countryside are capable of absorbing individual houses without harm. Clearly you cannot have too many or you will get the proliferation you rightly wish to avoid. In these matters studying what has gone before is usually informative and the countryside already contains very many examples of single dwellings in mature surroundings which do not adversely affect the countryside. Most would not now obtain permission in spite of contributing in some cases undoubted enhancement.

The countryside in my lifetime has suffered quite severe depopulation: we need people to live in it, to care for it and to support village services. Maybe the obsession around rural development only being considered sustainable if it is located where there are services may wane with the advent of electric powered transport. The Scottish Government I think once had a policy which supported rural housing since it attracted entrepreneurial people into the countryside and thereby stimulated the economy. There is something in that.



**Housing in the Countryside Policy: non farming /forestry businesses**

One gap in policy is that although it is legitimate for a house to be built in association with a farming or forestry business there does not seem to be any room for other businesses. We had an example of a local small builder who having started up needed a yard and a small shed with an adjacent house to provide security. In the past tradesmen's yards developed organically in the gardens of village houses but these opportunities have receded and have not been replaced by generally available range of secure workshops. The countryside should not just be for farming and forestry; it could accommodate other small businesses.

**Coldingham Sands: inappropriate use of Housing in the Countryside policy**

This representation is about the shortcomings of the current “Housing in the Countryside” policy when applied to a settlement like Coldingham Sands - which is not defined as a settlement in the Local Development Plan. But a village we surely have here for Coldingham Sands is now a settlement of 37 houses (counting the granted permissions at The Shieling and The Mount) strung around the bay stretching from Milldown Cottage to the south west to The Haven at the north east.

The “Housing in the Countryside” policy formulated around small building groups tends to be defined by largely 2 dimensional mechanistic considerations and is much too crude a tool. A more sensitive and sophisticated policy is required. This needs surely to be informed by urban design considerations including the architectural and spacial characteristics of the place and particularly by the character which the topography provides. To an extent these are qualitative matters but they are not immune to analysis which ought to draw from the evolution of village form in Berwickshire and elsewhere.

Such a policy might have queried the invasion of the public realm of the Sands by the Pavilion which cuckoo-like inhabits the lower public domain of the beach, one of Berwickshire’s premier places. It is not its contemporary persona that matters. It is that it elicits the public response “how dare it be there, this is our place”. Not for nothing are views of it in promotional material usually edited out. In time planting will soften the intrusion but the point is the policy mechanisms which applied were simply insufficient.

Complex though the arguments were at the time of the application, about replacing the Edwardian annex hut associated with The Haven the key consideration which derives from the three dimensional essence of the place was overlooked. It is though buildings started to appear in Princes Street Gardens, or indeed (as they have) in the front gardens of Bogan in Coldingham - a one sided street. A more thoughtful appreciation of urban space and form of the development is needed.

This is not to argue that a policy, properly informed by 3 dimensional urban design considerations should be wholly defensive. On the contrary, a rounder appreciation of the characteristics of the place can offer up opportunities for the kind of organic growth observable in our villages by anyone with the mind to look and learn. If the one sided Bogan in Coldingham did not exist the current policies would not allow it to be added to the village now. So although it might first be alarming if houses were built at the top of the brae in the gap between The Haven and St Veda’s overlooking the beach. But better there than at the bottom of the brae like The Pavilion, and well done, exploiting the drama which the topography provides, they would be at one with the essence of the place.

Lastly, we want to refer to another such opportunity in relation to the land adjacent to Creel House which is currently the subject of a Pre-App Enquiry 18/00625/PREAPP. Details are attached which we wish to be part of this representation. Strictly the enquiry is about only one house but it refers to the potential for the topography to absorb several houses fitted unobtrusively into the fold of the ground along the footway to the Creel Path making for a completely natural small extension to the village (see drawing L02).

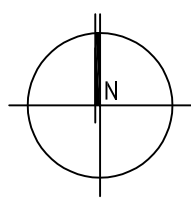
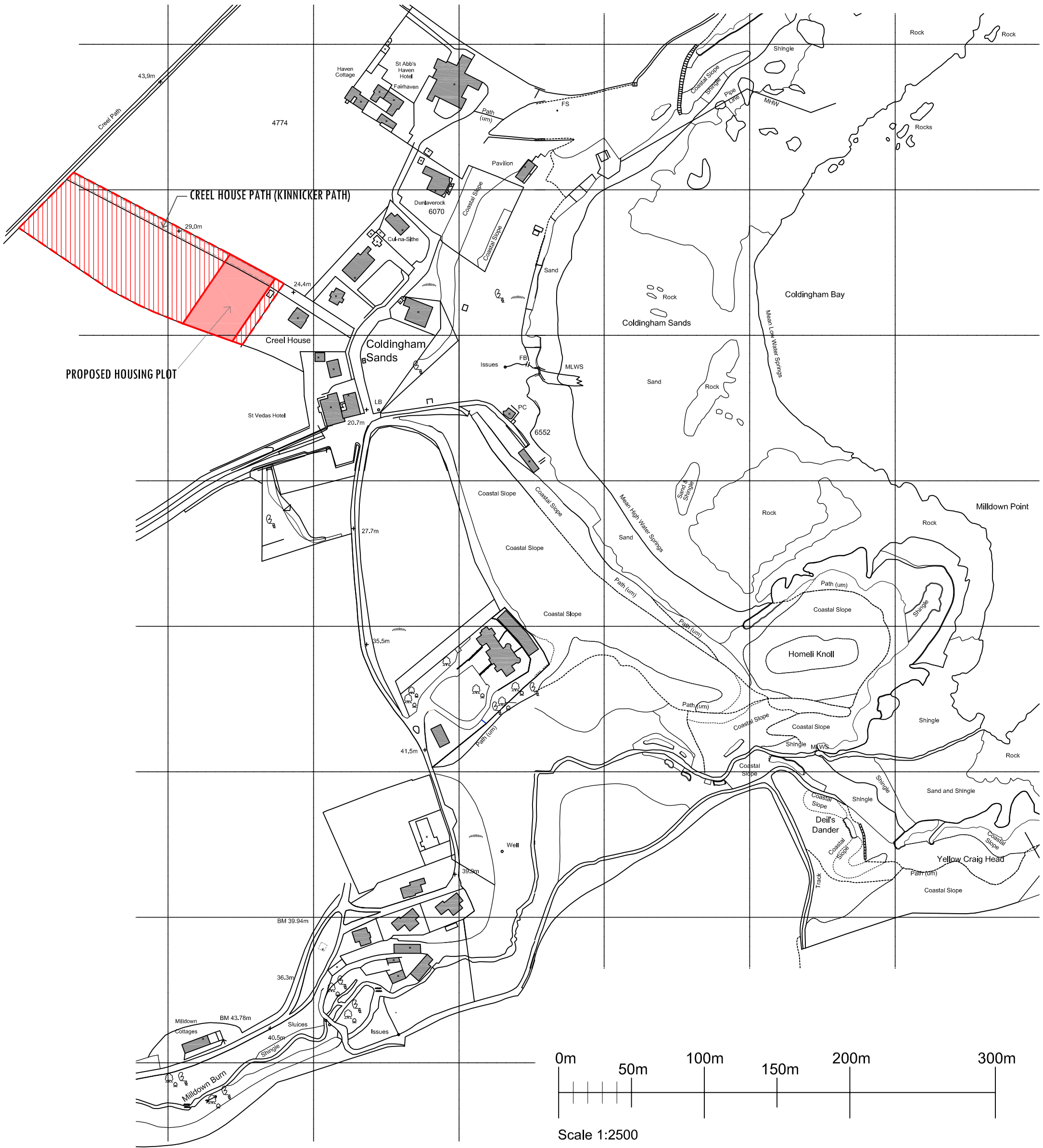
We need to accept that Coldingham Sands is a popular place to live. It has grown to its present size from the late 1800’s when there were only 2 or 3 scattered houses.

The planned Berwickshire expansion in the Local Development Plan has been slow in coming partly because many of the housing sites are large ones requiring large developers. But we continue to need more people so we need to find better ways of achieving better small scale expansion and why should some of this not be at Coldingham Sands where there appears to be a strong market for new houses?

How to achieve this? It seems to me there needs to be an input of urban design skills into the Local Development Plan process to help create a policy more suited to settlements like Coldingham Sands than the "Housing in the Countryside Policy".

A straightforward initial step would be to give Coldingham Sands the status of a village and we would argue for the village development boundary drawn to include the land adjacent to Creel House. In general though, some flexibility is required when determining development boundaries. Once a black line is drawn it can be a barrier to worthwhile development that was not conceived of when the Plan was compiled.

In parallel with your proposal for a more flexible policy for isolated houses in the countryside (refer para 5.14 of "Planning for Housing") where houses are of exceptional design quality, could something similar apply to village development where, although not anticipated in the preparation of the Local Development Plan, a development if it were high quality would enhance and compliment the local setting?



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Project  
**Pre Application Enquiry - Proposed New Dwelling At  
 Land Adjacent To, Creel House, Coldingham Sands**  
 Drawing

**LOCATION PLAN.**

Date      Scale      Job No      Drawing No  
**Oct. 2018      1:2500.      5315.      L/02.**

Drawn by  
**JRB**

Checked by

Revision

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**elevation**  
FROM NORTH EAST. A RELAXED ROW

**concept**

1. THE ADDITION OF A NEW PLACE TO THE COLDINGHAM SANDS SETTLEMENT
2. A SMALL RURAL GROUP OF 5 HOUSES IN A RELAXED ROW FORMAT, ARRANGED TO CAPTURE COMMUNAL SPACE IN THE FORM OF A SMALL GREEN
3. THE GROUP IS STRONGLY CONTAINED BY THE TOPOGRAPHY WITH ONLY LONG VIEWS INWARDS FROM BLACKPOTS, HIGH UP TO THE WEST
4. SMALL HOUSES ARE APPROPRIATE - IN THE PATTERN OF COLDINGHAM ROWS AT FISHERS DRAKE AND THE BOGAN
5. THE RIGHT OF WAY WOULD BE RETAINED PASSING THIS NEW PLACE ON THE WAY TO THE CREEL PATH
6. THE WILD GARDEN WOULD BE RETAINED AT THE WEST END - PERHAPS ENHANCED WITH PUBLIC ACCESS TO A CIRCULAR PATH AND A SITTING AREA ADDING RICHNESS TO THE PATH SYSTEM



**site layout**  
1:1000

**view**  
FROM EAST

**houses**

3N:	3 BEDROOM	1 1/2 STOREY FAMILY HOUSES	105m <sup>2</sup>
1N:	3 BEDROOM	1 STOREY FAMILY HOUSE	105m <sup>2</sup>
1N:	2 BEDROOM	1 STOREY ELDERLY	70m <sup>2</sup>

**Creel House**  
COLDINGHAM SANDS  
MYTHYS ARNOLD

PROPOSAL FOR SMALL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

PRELIMINARY SKETCH

1

BAIN SWAN ARCHITECTS  
10/2012



## Proposed Dwelling at Land Adjacent to Creel House, Coldingham Sands



### Pre-App Enquiry

Allan Swan. Bain, Swan Architects. October 2018

### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Please read in conjunction with drawings L01 and L02

The applicants are owners of the land at Coldingham Sands and wish to obtain Planning Permission in Principle for a house. They have requested us to make this pre-application enquiry.

1. Housing plot

The strip of land is of approximate dimensions 45 x 160m (see dwg. L01) behind Creel House, Coldingham Sands. It is not in agricultural use, and amounts to a small grass paddock at the end of the Creel House garden.

The ground is contained within a distinctive fold in the topography, rising quite steeply to the south west and contained on the north east by vigorous tall hedges which mark a pedestrian path (a Right of Way) to the Creel Path to the north west. Creel Path is an ancient footpath linking St Abbs with Coldingham. The inside hedge is comparatively new, established by the applicants - the footpath used to go through the field without any definition on the south west side. The applicants refer to this as Creel House path and it seems also known as Kinnicker Path. The hedge on the south west side was located to allow vehicular access to the field beyond the Creel Path to the north west. Creel Path is an ancient footpath linking St Abbs with Coldingham.

This enquiry is in respect of a possible housing plot at the south east end, either adjacent to the garden boundary of Creel House, or astride it if that would be of any advantage.

2. Vehicular access

Access to the plot would be obtained by a new private access road on the line of the track on the north east side of Creel House which emerges on the road to the Haven. The track is in the ownership of the applicants so the current boundary on the north east side of Creel House could be adjusted as required. The Right of Way would continue.

3. Planning policy

It is appreciated that the Council has no other policy with which to assess development proposals at Coldingham Sands other than the current Housing in the Countryside Policy, and its various mechanisms including small building groups. A doctrinal interpretation of the Housing in the Countryside Policy probably does not give rise to confident expectation of a successful outcome to this enquiry since the addition of a house here might be construed as a departure from the existing settlement pattern extending beyond the current garden boundaries into adjoining ground and therefore not in accordance with policy.

On the other hand there is plenty of precedent of double depth development with one house behind another in Berwickshire villages and the grass paddock is not an agricultural field as such.

A village we surely have here for Coldingham Sands is now a settlement of 37 houses (counting those granted permission at The Shieling and The Mount) strung around the bay stretching from Milldown Cottage to the south west round to the Haven at the north east. The Housing in the Countryside Policy, whatever its value within the countryside cannot be said to provide much guidance or encouragement when it comes to village form.

The building group mechanism was surely never intended for this sort of settlement and is an inadequate tool to use on its own for the purpose of achieving contextual, sympathetic infill development or small scale expansion. If the row of houses at the Bogan in Coldingham did not exist the policy would not now support it. Also, artificial construct that it is, it is much too mechanistic to operate well in a settlement such as this where the landscape form is a primary force. Something is needed that springs from a broader appreciation of the way the buildings at Coldingham Sands interact with one another and more especially with the landscape. The perils of applying a set of rules without taking account of the important spacial subtleties of belonging are well illustrated by the Pavilion which, cuckoo like, impinges on the public domain of the beach, one of Berwickshire's premier places. It is not its contemporary persona that matters. It is that it elicits the public response "how dare it be there, this is our place". Not for nothing are views of it in promotional material always edited out. In time its planting will soften the intrusion but the point is the policy mechanisms which applied were simply insufficient. A more nuanced and sophisticated appreciation of the (urban) space and form of the settlement is required.

We need to accept that Coldingham Sands is a popular place to live. It has grown to its present size from the late 1800's when there were only two or three houses. The planned Berwickshire expansion in the Local development Plan has been slow in coming and we continue to need more people so we need to find better ways of achieving better quality small scale expansion and why should some of this not be at Coldingham Sands?

A good way to approach this is by appreciating what it is that makes up the character of the place; these houses obtain their essence from being at the top of the brae overlooking the sands; these houses derive their sense of place from being grouped on the site of a farm steading alongside the Dean at the Milldown Burn - and so on. In each case the topography is a key component of the sense of place.

This enquiry is about one house but the part the topography plays in the village context suggests that exploiting the topography here would be a way of fitting several houses unobtrusively into the fold of the ground along the footway to the Creel Path making for a completely natural small extension to the village.

This argument for more sensitivity where Coldingham Sands is concerned, in essence the exercise by Development Management itself of the kind of placemaking skills SBC advocates in its SPG 'Placemaking and Design' is one we have put forward in the 'Call for Sites' process attached to the Main Issues Report.

We attach our submission for information.

██████████, when I spoke to him before he left, welcomed the suggestion of a more relevant policy for places like Coldingham Sands. When I rang recently, nobody could recall our submission so I agreed to send it in again during the forthcoming consultation period associated with the Local Development Plan Main Issues Report. I hope this is not an illustration of dwindling appreciation of the importance of a strong three dimensional element of urban (I wish there were a better adjective) design in planning.

In the circumstances might there be merit in this proposal for one house if it were designed to fit into a sympathetic overall master plan for several additional houses in a place of their own strung out informally up the fold in the ground alongside the route to the Creel Path, thereby facilitating a modest amount of environmentally acceptable future growth?

We would very much like to engage with you on this and look forward to hearing from you.

### **Row housing**

In the response 6 on Coldingham Sands and response 3 on the mechanics of the Housing in the Countryside policy I have argued that an element of three dimensional architectural and urban design skill, or at least awareness, is indispensable. This is true throughout the process from the thinking incorporated in the Local Development Plan to the writing of the Development Briefs to Development Control. What is not always present is a simple appreciation of the elements that make our settlements successful places; what we can learn from the way they have changed organically in their history and how that might translate into creating a better standard of development.

A particular *bête noire* is the insistence that development on the fringes of villages must be closely cossetted by dense structure planting which now seems to be deemed essential to create contextual definition in the landscape - regardless of aspect or orientation. But who in their right mind wants to block off warm south and west sunlight, and where there are village antecedents for this perversity? There are none. There are other more subtle ways of handling the transition between village and countryside.

More fundamentally though, since the war village development has tended to be relatively suburban in character with semi-detached houses predominating. Derek Inglis does a terrific job in championing a more comprehensive urban design approach through "Designing Streets", and your "Placemaking and Design" contain good advice. But I am just not sure that this always filters through.

Fifteen years ago in anticipation of the then planned substantial housing expansion in Berwickshire I prepared a paper on Row Housing in modern rural development as a contribution to the debate on how to achieve higher standards of design.

It was intended as a reminder that the building block of our successful settlements - which has given them coherence and form - derives from joined up fabric consisting of rows of buildings relating to street, square and green giving villages the means to express their urbanity, the coming together of their parts and contributing to an individual sense of place and belonging.

It contrasted the "could be anywhere" placelessness of many suburban village extensions , both public and private housing, often with cul de sac layouts reflecting the dominance of the car and noted that in a sense they are parasitic, any personal sense of place deriving not from their own intrinsic character or form but borrowed from their nearby village cores.

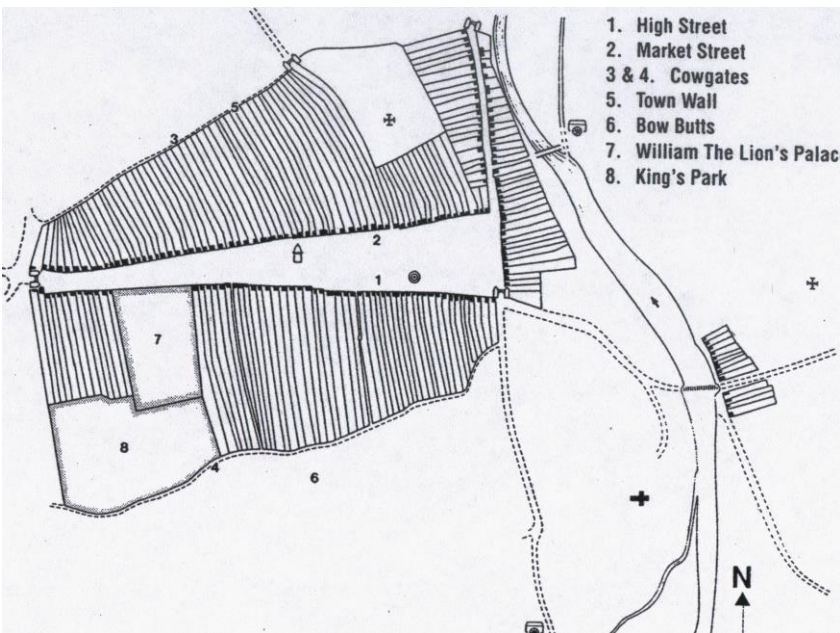
It looked forward to our Bogangreen scheme in Coldingham (09/00757/OUT) not yet built because of the recession and the still constrained reach of developers down the A1. Maybe Reston Station will change that. It contributed to the master planning at Easter Langlee/Melrose Court where in spite of the unpromising national house builder context something of the urban design values that helped inform the early conception stubbornly persist.

So with another Local Development Plan in the making and as an exhortation to remember the importance of urban design sensibilities to the whole process of crafting good quality development from deep in the planning process to physical implementation I am attaching, as a contribution, my paper once again.





**Bogan, Coldingham**



**Haddington 12<sup>th</sup> Century**



## **ROW HOUSING**

**in modern rural development**

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## **ROW HOUSING in modern rural development**

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This paper is about row housing, and its application as a component in the design of modern rural development, to realise environmental, architectural, economic and social goals. It is written primarily with forthcoming development at Bogangreen in Coldingham in mind. The village street antecedents referred to at School Road and The Bogan have been personally experienced by the author who has lived with his family in both places for 35 years. However, although the paper is aimed at Coldingham it is intended as a contribution to the process of design of modern development in other Berwickshire and Borders settlements.



**Bogan, Coldingham**



**School Road, Coldingham**

The various means of planning, designing and delivering rural development are important current issues brought about by the land allocated for Housing in the current Local Plan, and in the wider context, by the advice given to local Authorities in the Scottish Executive's SPP 15 to encourage more rural development.

Much needed though it is, the scale of development proposed, and inevitable within the next few years, will impose significant environmental and social pressure on Coldingham and other settlements.

### Quality of recent development

The quality of recent development does not give rise to confidence that the inevitable changes in prospect can be handled successfully. It would be unfair to say that recent development has displayed a complete absence of design but there has been a lack of strategic thinking exemplified by a preponderance of development characterised by increasing placelessness and an absence of rigour in the approach to design which is producing architectural detail which is neither locally appropriate or properly contemporary. This is not altogether due to designers, although suitably qualified designers with a full remit are absent from much development: it is more a function of the acceptance of standards that have been too low for too long. If our approach is always the same we cannot complain if the results are always the same.

The saving grace has been that most development has been small scale, incremental in pattern and has proceeded slowly enough to be perceived as organic growth. However, the extraordinarily rapid growth of suburban development at Dunbar and the unprecedented interest national housebuilders are now showing in Berwickshire is likely to produce more rapid development at a greater scale than hitherto.



### The use of Design Briefs

There is therefore a pressing need to examine ways in which the inevitable development can be realised in ways which are not only economically and socially, but also architecturally, beneficial. One useful tool would be the wider use of Design Briefs but these will require to be based on a deeper understanding of the village context than seems now possible under the Local Plan process and will require the input of considerable urban design expertise and appropriate resources. It will be necessary to set higher standards and to insist on these being met. The autocratic imposition of shallow, lowest common denominator design guide strictures based upon “vernacular” detailing is to be avoided in favour of an approach based on contemporary interpretation of fundamental issues of context. The influence of the roads engineer, only one factor in the design of successful places, will have to be challenged to extend thinking to produce more rounded solutions which contribute rather than conflict with the agenda.

### Row Housing as a component in new development

This paper is intended to be a contribution to the debate which must precede this process. Row housing in a rural context is simply terraced development employed with a flexibility which allows for variation in the size, tenure and use of each unit.



**Swinton**



**Greenlaw**



**Fishers Brae, Coldingham**



**Ayton**

Put simply, row housing as an architectural form is what has given our settlements their coherence and form. The disposition of rows of buildings relating to street, square and green is the means by which settlements express their urbanity, the coming together of their parts, which has produced such successful places. The creation of satisfying places should be the aim in new development and this can only be achieved by the application of the mechanics of urbanity.



**Coldingham High Street**

Urbanity may be a curious term to use in a rural context. However, its meaning may be understood by contrasting *suburban* development whose character we intuitively recognise as a dilution of the qualities of the larger scale urban centre. Coldingham undoubtedly possesses urban qualities at its closer knit core, its mix of buildings and uses standing shoulder to shoulder addressing and enclosing its public space, creating a sense of place which is in marked contrast with the more dispersed development in the rural hinterland.

#### The problems of suburban development

Because of their comparatively small size, villages like Coldingham are more disadvantaged by advancing suburbanisation which diminishes the quality of their urban fabric by blurring the distinction between the urban centre and the countryside.

The over-riding problem in future development is how to mitigate the effects of overwhelming suburbanisation manifested on the one hand by the wasteful use of land to build individual houses on individual plots with minimal contribution to the civic realm and, on the other, by large scale developments by national developers whose lowest common denominator, low risk, consumer led agendas produce the same product whatever the context.



**Burnhall, Coldingham**



**Fishers Brae, Coldingham**



**Fishers Brae, Coldingham**

This is no new problem, since almost all 20th century development has involved detached or semi-detached buildings. However, the older detached buildings make significant contribution to the village-scape with outbuildings, garden walls, ground paving and mature planting contributing richness to the urban lexicon of architectural articulation of public and private space. Coldingham is fortunate to have good examples of Arts and Crafts houses and where infill development has occurred the already rich village fabric has aided integration. The village also has an excellent off road footpath system. Where there are pre-existing urban components of such quality they should be seized on to help integrate new development and marry it to the existing fabric.



**Priors Walk, Coldingham**



**Knowes Close, Hutton**

The village has been fortunate to avoid bulky semi-detached groups of council houses/ flats out of scale with the village core and in Abbots Row and Priors Walk has layouts based on straightforward streets. In other villages council house building has followed Garden City precedents, albeit in diluted form, and has usually been essentially suburban.



**Lawfield, Coldingham**



**Lawfield Coldingham**

At Lawfield, where a single developer was involved but mercifully the site was developed incrementally, the usual estate cul-de-sac pattern was followed with suburban roads rather than streets, reflecting the dominance of the car. The pattern where multiple developers have been involved in other villages is broadly similar, as can be seen by the following tour round Berwickshire and Roxburgh villages.

Compared with their village cores, these developments are unavoidably suburban. To date they are not too damaging. Their impacts are mitigated by mature planting which gives a sense of repose, and by the fact that such developments are not yet ubiquitous and do not threaten to overwhelm their villages. But the unavoidable conclusion is that they could be anywhere. In a sense they are parasitic, any perceived sense of place deriving not from their own intrinsic character or form, but borrowed from their nearby village cores. When new developments are populated mainly by city dwellers migrating to the countryside, suburban developments that are set apart from villages can only exacerbate a 'them and us' mentality impacting badly on social integration. The prospect of more and more of the same is not an inviting one. The essential visual sterility of suburban development in our villages is illustrated by these comparisons with parts of their historic cores.





**Ayton**

In time honoured fashion of Scottish Tollbooths, the Clock Tower is easily absorbed into the row without fuss



**Paxton**

Small single storey cottages with a rural feel



**Cockburnspath**

Individual buildings can be “joined up” by their use of urban vocabulary of walls, fences, outbuildings and their attitude to public space



**Maxton**

Single and one and a half storey roadside cottages





**Ednam**  
**A designed row behind front gardens**



**Greenlaw**  
**Set backs, projecting gables, varying heights contribute interest and variety to this sturdy and distinctively Scottish group**



Contrasting urbanity

By way of comparison, a look at the south side of School Road reveals an altogether different level of complexity and sophistication. At its foot the matter of fact integration of French's Garage, with its modern bulky bus shed, into the Coldingham Cross row is a triumph. Further up, the punctuation and articulation of the mix of detached houses and row houses provided by the outbuildings set at right angles to the street, with garden walls and planting defining the gardens and yards, makes for a rich composition whose coherence, vitality and wealth of visual interest we take for granted, but which modern suburban development patterns cannot begin to match.



**The Square Coldingham**



**School Road Coldingham**





**School Road Coldingham**



**School Road, Coldingham**

School Road is not perfect. It is dominated by the road and the demands of through traffic, and the off-carriageway surfacing round the Cross is confused. But, although it is relatively unremarkable as village streets go, the challenge is how to replicate the contribution it makes to the village-scape in modern development.



**The Bogan, Coldingham,**



Another Coldingham Street, The Bogan, a single sided row of weaver's cottages, provides a clue as to how we may make a start. It is a remarkably simple but effective street with private gardens to the rear, sloping down to the Hill Burn and smaller front gardens sloping to the Bogan Burn. Most of the latter now successfully accommodate parking areas, although regrettably in one case a new garage, which compromises the essential one-sidedness character of the street. The lane is placed immediately adjoining the houses, its narrowness and informality a natural curb on vehicle speeds. The row includes a range of sizes of houses, originally all single storey but now with many extended to one and a half and two storeys, producing a delightful composition which has the flexibility to accommodate and express the different requirements of different householders, giving each house an identity which nonetheless does not compromise the unity of the whole.



**Hume**



**Oldhamstocks**



**Foulton**

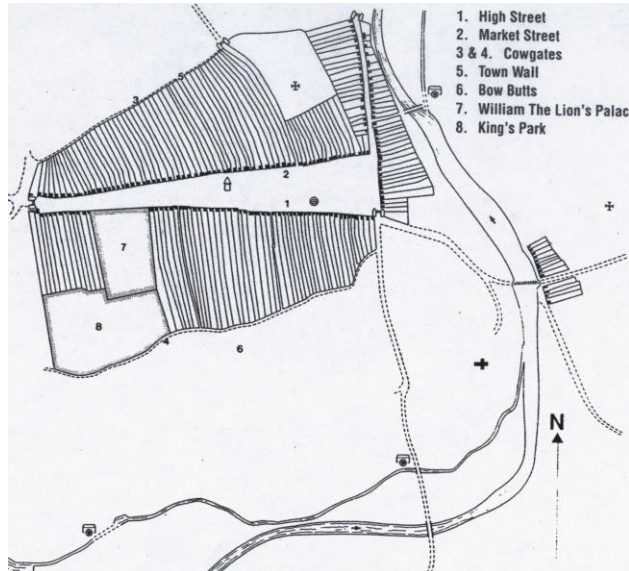
The picturesque quality of The Bogan, and other examples such as Hume, Oldhamstocks and Foulton, makes it easy to overlook the underlying strength of their governing urban design mechanics. The contribution they make to the creation



of a distinctive sense of place is out of all proportion to the modesty of their individual buildings.

### A modern form of row housing

This paper's proposal for a modern form of row housing to be used in forthcoming village development as a means of raising its architectural and urban design quality draws its inspiration from The Bogan. Our row housing proposal in the Local Plan consultation submission for housing on land at Bogangreen, some two hundred metres to the north, would in effect be a "New Bogan": contemporary housing satisfying modern day requirements in a row form.



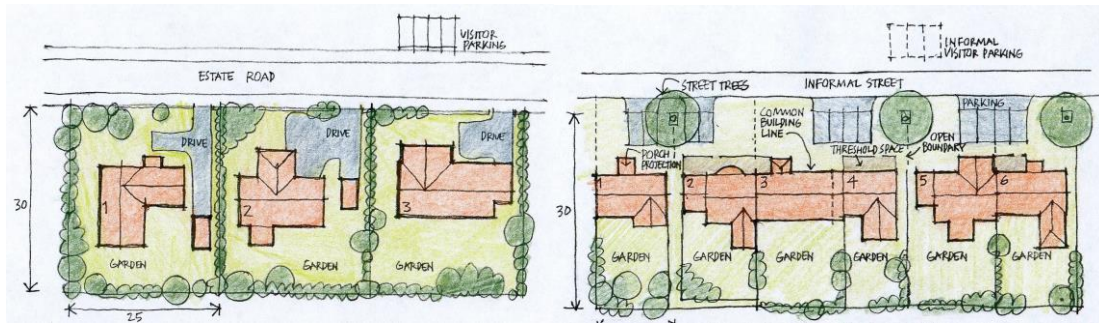
12<sup>th</sup> Century Haddington

The proposal also draws inspiration from the ancient feu plans of Scottish Burghs in the middle ages, which laid down development rules which have been capable of accommodating almost limitless change while still retaining the underlying structure still easily recognisable in the 21st century.

### Procurement mechanics

The first requirement in the procurement of row housing is therefore a working set of rules to produce the correct balance between the individual developer and the needs of the village. These might consist of the following.

Ground would be sold in metre multiples of plot width. This would discourage wasteful use of ground, the aim being to achieve at least double the number of units compared with a conventional private house plot layout. This would deliver cheaper plots for the middle and low ends of the market and provide the flexibility to meet the requirements of different developers and different tenures side by side, so replicating the social mix of the village. Affordable houses built by a Housing Association could therefore exist alongside self-build houses financed by RHOG grants alongside standard mid-market private houses built and sold by a small developer.



**A conventional 3 plot layout 75m wide**

**The same footprint but providing 6 row houses**

- Each building would have to be built on a common building line ensuring the formation of sufficiently continuous frontage to present to a public space, whether street or green, so that the row and the public space are indivisibly connected. Projections forward of the frontage would be allowed for porches and the like and to create defensible threshold spaces, but these would be strictly controlled, as would the erection of front garden fences and walls.
- Each house would have to directly adjoin the adjacent buildings on at least one side, to ensure continuity of the terrace. All buildings built prior to their neighbours would require to have suitably widened gable foundations. Access to rear gardens would be by suitably spaced paths placed between buildings or by shared private paths formed between gables or through pends.



**An arrangement of new housing round a green to provide a sense of identity and place with a secondary access road and a mixture of sizes and configurations of houses allowing combinations of different tenures and prices and a social mix reflecting village patterns**

- There would be general limitations on depth of buildings' front to back and on projections into rear gardens to allow light to the rear of neighbouring houses but these would not be so restrictive as to eliminate flexibility of design.
- The fronts of garages, if wanted, would have to line with the frontage and developers would be encouraged to integrate garages with house designs in order to subjugate dominance of the car on the domain between house and street.
- Developers would be at liberty to build single, one and a half and two storey height houses and there would be a set of rules governing abutment design and maintenance access, the aim being to achieve vitality, interest and individual identity without compromising the unity of the whole.
- There would be a general set of criteria covering general design including roof pitches, wall and roof finishes, openings, front and rear garden boundaries, in order to ensure sufficient architectural coherence in the row. This requirement is not meant to eliminate difference, and certainly not contemporary design, but merely to ensure general compatibility.
- The primary developer would normally undertake the installation of the roads and services. Services in particular would require to be designed initially in accordance with the predicted number of units in the row. Sufficient flexibility in the design of services would require to be incorporated to allow for varying take up of frontage width.
- There would be a requirement for each developer to contribute to the organisation and cost of the management and maintenance of any common amenities such as common greens, amenity planting, paths etc.
- The sale arrangements would include the requirement for all designs to be submitted to an agreed authority for approval to ensure an appropriate balance between the requirements of the individual developer and the whole. The objective of the ground rules would be to regulate development to produce the urban design benefits already described, but with sufficient flexibility to satisfy a wide range of social, economic and architectural requirements. Notwithstanding the ground rules, the agreed authority would be entitled to allow developers to break any rules if judged in the general interest.





**Two studies of different combinations of row housing and private plots at Bogangreen Coldingham.**



**Conclusion**

This concept is not put forward without some misgiving. On the one hand, it is so obvious the wonder is that it has not been thought of and tried before. On the other hand, although the mechanics of delivering row housing in a modern form must broadly be similar to those that operated historically, to which we owe our thanks for moulding our towns and villages into the special places they are, the concern must be, as with anything different or revolutionary, that all sorts of bureaucratic objections will be raised.

No doubt these will prove difficult to overcome, but the goal of a more urbanist approach to the design of rural development is a worthy one and although row housing is by no means a panacea, its incorporation would stiffen new village fabric and give it much needed form, helping at the same time to conserve the essence of our settlements and meet the needs of a growing population.

Acknowledgement – Haddington map taken from “The Story of Scotland’s Towns by Robert J. Naismith

**Reston**

This response is simple. The railway has such importance to the area it is absolutely vital that all necessary infrastructure pre-planning is in place before it arrives. As well as the roads infrastructure which attaches to the railway - roads and parking etc. no doubt this will involve engaging with Scottish water on water supply infrastructure , on main surface and foul sewers within the village, and on the capacity of the waste water treatment works.

Years of inertia will have to be overcome to engage the Education Department in reaching a solution to the Primary School capacity - determining a site for a new one if that is required, or reaching a solution which also involves the Ayton and Coldingham schools.

None of this will happen by itself: Scottish Borders Council ought to lead.