



Middleton St George Parish Council

www.middleton-st-george.org.uk

clerk@middleton-st-george.org.uk

5, Whitebridge Drive,
Darlington,
DL1 3TY.

10th October, 2023.

Emma Williams – Planning Case Officer
Planning Department
The Town Hall
Darlington
DL1 5QT

Dear Emma,

21/00529/FUL. Demolition of existing agricultural buildings and structures and development of 260 no. dwellings including access, open space, landscaping, sustainable drainage systems and associated infrastructure and works (Amended plans received 18th September 2023) (Amended description). Land To The West & South Of Station Road Station Road MIDDLETON ST GEORGE DARLINGTON

OBJECTION

Middleton St George Parish Council considered the above planning application at its meeting last night. The Parish Council reiterated its **strongly object** to this application on the grounds which were given in my letter to you of the 15th June, 2021 which is enclosed. I also enclose my letters to you of the 11th and 12th October, 2021 giving additional objections which still apply.

The grounds for the Parish Council's strong objections to this planning application are as follows:

- The site lies in the open countryside as it lies outside the development limits defined by Darlington Local Plan policy E2 – the Council can demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, therefore this policy is not considered out of date;
- As at the time of the previous proposal, outline application (ref. 16/00976/OUT), when it was due to be considered by the Planning Applications Committee in June 2019, the Council could already evidence a 5 year housing land supply, a reason why the application was not considered at that time. Nothing has changed, in fact the Council can now evidence even more supply since that date. And the Draft Local Plan can be given little or no weight, given the amount of opposition to the housing target and allocations;

- There is no sound justification for this site being developed within the emerging Local Plan either regarding development boundaries or to benefit the community as a service village;
- The proposed development would result in an unacceptable level of traffic which would, alongside other recently approved development, have a severe impact on the road network, compromise highway safety. It would also result in the loss of public rights of way. This would be contrary to Paragraph 98 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- There has been no regard to the submitted Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan or its supporting evidence base which is a material consideration in the determination of the application;
- The evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan clearly demonstrates that there is no justification for the proposed development (ref. MSG Neighbourhood Plan, and its accompanying Housing Needs Assessment, Settlement Boundary Background Paper, and Design Guide);
- The proposed level of housing, its density, type and mix does not reflect the needs of the area and is contrary to the Middleton St George Housing Needs Assessment and Design Code;
- The site is at risk of flooding, and this has not been sufficiently addressed within the application documents. The proposal is therefore contrary to the requirements of DCS policy CS16 and paragraphs 163 and 165 of the NPPF ;
- The proposal would result in a loss of significance of the Cades Roman Road. This is clearly contrary to Darlington Core Strategy (DCS) policy CS14 (Preserving the separate character and appearance of the villages and the countryside including the distinct landscape features of landmarks in the villages), and to Paragraph 197 of the NPPF;
- All the grounds for objection to the original proposals (during the course of 2016 to 2019) are still valid, even more so in fact due to the increased development in the village, and therefore the problems will only worsen. (Traffic congestion and increased road hazards on what are village roads intended for village traffic, encroachment on existing Public Rights of Way, archaeological remains of Cade's Roman Road, impact on existing services such as the GP Practice, and impact on wildlife).

Planning Context for this site

This revised full detailed planning application has been submitted following the pre application leaflet which Story Homes distributed in the village in March 2021.

The Parish Council objected to the outline planning application (ref. 16/00976/OUT) (Parish Council letter dated 6th November 2016).

This first version of the outline planning application contained space for a school. The Parish Council's grounds for objection included increased traffic risk (including relating to the proposed space for a school).

Highways England put a holding recommendation on the application for a long period of time "recommends that planning permission not be granted for a specified time..." (several sequential letters were issued by Highways England over a period of time). The reason for the holding recommendation was "to ensure that the A66 Trunk Road continues to serve its purpose as part of a national system of routes for

through traffic in accordance with Section 10(2) of the Highways Act 1980 by minimising disruption of the trunk road network and in the interests of traffic safety.”

After some time, Highways England lifted this holding recommendation (March 2019).

However, Highways England have recently (letter dated 11th June 2021) put another holding recommendation on the application – that the application should not be determined before 11th September 2021.

And Highways require further information, as follows:

Further discussions will be required between the Applicant, DBC and Highways England to agree appropriate wording for the s106 Agreement, in order to secure a contribution towards highway works on the A66. These discussions will need to identify contribution figures for works at Little Burdon and Morton Palms using the same principles that were applied to the previous application for the development site. However, the contributions will need to allow for indexing to reflect 2021 prices.

In terms of the village roads and traffic safety risk, the Parish Council consider that this development would still constitute a high risk.

A revised outline application was submitted in 2019. This time, the proposal omitted the space for a school, but instead included more houses.

The Parish Council again objected (letter of 26th February 2019), including on the grounds of traffic, impact on Public Rights of Way, and the Roman Road.

This revised outline application was meant to be considered by Darlington Borough Council Planning Applications Committee on 5th June 2019, but was withdrawn from the Agenda at the last minute along with the large Coniscliffe applications “on legal advice” (Darlington Borough Council announced shortly after this that they would be looking at the Darlington Local Plan and the housing figures). The Parish Council (3rd June 2019) and the Campaign for Rural England (31st May 2019) had written to the Planning Applications Committee prior to 5th June stating that a) the application conflicts with existing policies (outside the current development limits), b) Darlington Council can prove more than a five year supply of housing land (so the number of houses are not needed), and c) the Draft Darlington Local Plan can be given little or no weight, give the amount of opposition to the housing target and allocations. The Parish Council also objected on the grounds of effect on the Public Rights of Way, the Roman Road, and on impact of traffic on safety (the Parish Council had now carried out a traffic monitoring survey on existing number of vehicle movements at the site).

Returning to this present iteration of the proposal, as the Story Homes pre application leaflet said, this site is a housing allocation site within the draft Darlington Local Plan (site 099 on the Policy Maps).

During the [Regulation 19] consultation on this Darlington Local Plan in September 2020, the Parish Council submitted comments which included the recommendation that this site be taken out of the Local Plan because we now had an evidence-based document (Housing Needs Assessment for MSG) proving that the proposed housing on this site was not needed in the village.

The Housing Needs Assessment was carried out by a Government approved body in 2020 for the MSG Neighbourhood Plan (on which the Parish Council consulted both the residents of MSG parish as well as other statutory consultation bodies in Autumn 2020). The Neighbourhood Plan, as a result of the Housing Needs Assessment, consequently excluded the Station Road site from its settlement boundaries.

The current status of the Neighbourhood Plan is that, following that consultation in Autumn 2020, the responses have been taken into account, and the Plan documents have been updated. The updated, Submission Neighbourhood Plan was approved by the Parish Council at its meeting on 12th April 2021, and will be progressed to the Examination Stage.

So, the latest proposals by Story Homes for the Station Road site need to be considered in the context of all of the above.

Based on its previous decisions, the Parish Council considers that this site is a) not required based on housing numbers, b) still poses an increased traffic danger, c) will still impact on the Public Rights of Way over the site, d) will still impact on the Roman Road over that site (archaeology).

And in regards to the Darlington Local Plan, which is currently being examined by the Planning Inspector, there is still a strong case to say that Darlington's overall housing targets are way out of line with both the Government's own recommendations and with Darlington's own needs.

Outside the current 1997 Local Plan development limits, contrary to Policy E2

The current development plan for the Plan area comprises the: Darlington Core Strategy (2011) and the saved policies of the Darlington Local Plan (1997). Local plan policy E2 defines settlement limits for all three villages within the plan area and requires most new development to be located within settlements across the borough. Outside settlement boundaries, policy E2 restricts development to: agricultural or forestry operations; small scale development beneficial to the rural economy or the needs of rural communities; operational development; and countryside related sports or recreation activities.

Reference to the five year land supply position is relevant here - as the Council has a five year supply the policy should not be considered out of date (ref. Supreme Court's judgment in the Richborough case).

The emerging Darlington Local Plan – Development Boundaries

This site, no.99 in the Local Plan, as stated further down, is included in the emerging Local Plan.

However, there remain unresolved issues and objections, one of the grounds being in terms of development boundaries.

During the current Examination in Public of the Local Plan, the Inspector and at least one of the participants questioned the appropriateness of the boundaries and the lack of an assessment or criteria used to define them. One participant identified natural features such as watercourses and tree belts that are appropriate to use in setting boundaries.

The western boundary of the St George's Gate development on the north side of Darlington Road is clearly defined by the stream and woodland which follows it, forming a firm edge to the village. The same should apply to this site (Maxgate Farm site no.99) if, at the end of the day, the local plan is to include it as an allocation. The proposed layout breaks through this natural boundary into open fields beyond, where there is no boundary until the A67 Bypass is reached.

The emerging Darlington Local Plan – Service Villages

At the recent Examination in Public hearing session, there was discussion about national policy for service villages in rural areas. It was said that housing development should be permitted to help support local services. The reverse applies in MSG as there is no danger of the local shops and school closing through lack of people. In fact, permission has had to be granted for more shops and another school site to satisfy the demand from the excessive amount of new housing MSG is experiencing. Maxgate Farm is not needed to meet national policy - in fact the reverse applies.

Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan

On 13 April 2021, MSGPC submitted the Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan (MSGNP) to Darlington Borough Council (DBC) for examination. Its policies and the evidence base that supports it are therefore material considerations in the determination of this application. Therefore, an important part of that evidence base should be considered. The Middleton St George Housing Needs Assessment, the Settlement Boundary Background Paper and the Design Code.

<https://microsites.darlington.gov.uk/media/1681/oth2-middleton-st-george-neighbourhood-plan-march-2021.pdf>

<http://middleton-st-george.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Housing-needs-assessment.pdf>

<http://middleton-st-george.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Settlement-boundary-background-paper.pdf>

http://middleton-st-george.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Design-Guide1_Part1.pdf

http://middleton-st-george.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Design-Guide1_Part2.pdf

It is disappointing that the planning statement submitted in support of the application makes no reference to the emerging Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan which is a material consideration.

As a result of work undertaken to prepare the neighbourhood plan, the Parish Council considers that the application site is not suitable for development. Site 99 has a number of constraints (many of them detailed within this letter), including: access, flooding, infrastructure capacity and impact on historic assets (namely the Cades Roman Road). Highway's England objected to the proposed site allocation within the emerging local plan as a result of potential impacts on the strategic road network.

Site 099, however, is still proposed for development within the emerging local plan.

But the Parish Council, together with, and on behalf of, the residents of Middleton St George, have continued to emphasise our objection to this site being included in the emerging Local Plan. Comments were made on the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan to this effect, and this was followed up with Examination Hearing Statements on the Matter. Accordingly, the Neighbourhood Plan settlement boundary excludes this site.

Traffic and Highway Safety

The road infrastructure, due to the fact that Middleton St George is a village, is not, and was never intended to be, able to sustain the amount of traffic from the level of development which has recently been constructed and that which is under construction/approved. The roads are often congested, causing noise, pollution, and potential safety issues due to the roads being narrow and not designed to take the increased traffic (as well as the heaving construction traffic), and due to the fact that parking options are very limited, meaning that there is a lot of on road parking. For every development application, MSG Parish Council and residents provide evidence (including photographic) of the traffic problems. Applications for development on site 045 caused huge furore due to inadequate road conditions and traffic problems (leading to a Planning Appeal). And it was for this reason that we pressed for site 375 to be taken out of the Local Plan. In 2019, MSG Parish Council collected traffic data from a traffic monitor at the north end of the village (Station Road) as vehicles enter/exit from the north, over a period of 6 weeks (see report attached). Cumulative total across the 6 weeks = 70,788, Divided by 42 (days) = 1,685.43 vpd (vehicle movements per day).

Similarly, the traffic monitor was placed at the junction further south (Neasham Road/Middleton Lane), as vehicles enter/exit to the south of the village, over a period of 6 weeks. Cumulative total across the 6 weeks = 71,547

Divided by 42 (days) = 1,703.5 vpd (vehicle movements per day)

To work out an additional potential cumulative total vpd from extant permissions or commitments, as a minimum, using Station Road to enter and leave the village, you would need to take the following into consideration

16/00972/FUL. 27 houses Middleton Lane. Site 65. Potential increase in vpd, 108

15/00976/OUT, 17/01151/RM1. 198 rear of High Stell. Site 45. Potential increase in vpd, 792

Add to this the number of cars that this proposed development would bring to the village.

Number of houses, 260

Number of car parking spaces, **596!**

If every new house on this new development had an average of two cars totalling a likely average of 4 vehicle movements per day, **this would equate to 1,040 extra vpd**

But that is only a minimum figure

Cumulative total vpd along Station Road, taking all of the above into account

1,685.43 vpd, (plus, possibly 1,703.5 vpd entering and exiting the village at the south end), plus 108, plus 792, plus the 1,040 from this development

Consequently, the Parish Council has estimated that the Cumulative Total would be 5,329 vpd along Station Road

This is totally unacceptable.

This would increase significantly the likelihood of accidents. There are elderly and infirm residents that live around that area. The current traffic situation around Planform 1 pub is a nightmare. Residents who have houses with drives cannot exit them safely, and there are many terraced houses along Station Road with no off road parking which means that the already narrow road is constrained even further. Elderly people, and those using mobility scooters cannot cross the road safely as it is.

We submit that this proposal will not be sustainable, as rather than seeking to reduce car use to be environmentally friendly, it will instead do the reverse, by promoting car use thereby contributing to the existing and increasing traffic congestion and hazards.

This proposal is clearly contrary to three of the aims of the emerging Local Plan are as follows, we consider that the current proposal fails to do all of these.

- Improve the health and wellbeing of all, reduce health inequalities and promote healthier lifestyles,
- Encourage sustainable travel. Provide development which reduces reliance on private vehicles, maximising access to public transport and active travel modes
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the borough's resilience to climate change

Increased vehicular traffic and congestion, over and above the fact that green field will be built on, will all increase greenhouse gas emissions.

Loss of Public Rights of Way

Two Public Rights of Way, no.3 and no.4, cross the development site and link into the wider ROW network.

The proposed development would change completely the valued existing Public Rights of Way which people have been using for years.

The application Design and Access Statement states

The existing PROW's have also been incorporated into the layout design. Pedestrians will continue to be able to use these PROW's while walking through fully outward facing and expansive street scenes, giving them a feeling of comfort, surveillance, and security. Existing hedging and tree Lines along these PROW's have also been retained to still give a feeling of wilderness and greenery while walking through the estate.

However, a comparison of the existing PROW map with the proposed layout shows that this is not the case at all. The existing routes will be built over. In terms of impact on the rights of way, the proposed development will clearly have a significant material impact on the nature of the path, changing from a rural, agricultural environment to a suburban residential one. Therefore the long held and enjoyed rights of people to use the Public Rights of Way will be severely impacted.

Paragraph 98 of the NPPF states: *"Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails."*

MSG Neighbourhood Plan Policy MSG5 seeks to protect, and where practical, improve and extend the Green Infrastructure of the village. The existing PROWs form part of the valued existing green infrastructure.

On that basis, the Parish Council are opposed to any proposals to divert or extinguish the existing PROW.

Housing Needs and Cumulative Development

This proposal cannot be considered without taking account of the cumulative impact of the development in the village. The total allocations in the Local Plan for MSG are 1,244. This includes the site subject of this application. The Parish Council, throughout its submission to the Local Plan process, as well as throughout the planning applications consultation process, has consistently sustained objection to the proposal to provide over 10% of the inflated total housing requirement for the borough within the area of Middleton St George, with only 4% of the population of the borough, as well as a limited level of services and infrastructure.

As part of the Neighbourhood Plan process, the Parish Council commissioned an independent Housing Needs Assessment. In stark contrast to the above figures, the Housing Needs Assessment for the MSG Neighbourhood Plan identified that a range of between 119 to 136 dwellings were needed in the plan area over the plan period of 2019 to 2036.

Not only is the amount of development delivered and proposed to be allocated for Middleton St George completely unsustainable, unjustified and unfair, but it means that MSG, which is a village, with its own village character, will double in size thereby losing the character that makes it special.

Since the emerging Local Plan has yet to be adopted, the case for the Borough wide housing target of 492 per year, as opposed to the Government recommended figure of 177 per year, has yet to be determined as justified.

Therefore, this application must be determined on the basis of the existing 1997 Local Plan in terms of development limits. And, in terms of housing figures, given that, as at 2019 when an application for this site was due to be determined, the Council could already demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply way above the Government recommended figure of 177 per year as was demonstrated by the CPRE Analysis of the DBC 5 year Housing Land Position Statement of April 2019 which showed that taking into account committed sites alone, there is a supply of at least 8.8 years, based on the accepted Government requirement. Therefore, this development is not needed, and the Council is unable to justify granting

permission for it, given that it is still only an allocation in the emerging Local Plan, and therefore permission should be refused.

Development in MSG has already way surpassed any of the housing figures, as the completions and commitments for Middleton St George already exceeds the emerging Local Plan's target by over 580 dwellings.

There is also no guarantee that this site will be deliverable within the LPA's timeframe. In the Position Statement of 2019, only 105 houses out of the 260 proposed for the site at the time were likely to be constructed on total over 5 years! And in the most recent DBC figures, out of all the commitments for MSG, 496 still remain to be built! These are across 4 of the sites with extant planning permission. Large executive housing are slow to build out in MSG because they are struggling to sell, as they are not the type that are needed.

Wrong type of housing

Building the housing MSG needs, not having the type of housing imposed upon the village

Notwithstanding the fact that there is no justification for this development to be built in terms of housing numbers, the proposal is for a majority of housing which is not needed in the village.

With so many executive houses being granted permission in Middleton St George, the village is seriously at risk of losing its character, merely providing for a commuter economy, and not ensuring that villagers can stay with in the village.

The MSG Housing Needs Assessment highlighted that a disproportionate share of executive housing has recently been delivered in the parish (paragraph 158, page 37). The assessment illustrates a need for the provision of 38 affordable housing units over the period of the neighbourhood plan and estimates that there is potential demand for a further 128 affordable home ownership homes.

The Parish Council consider that executive housing schemes are not appropriate as they do not contribute to the creation of mixed and balanced communities. In practice, very limited affordable housing has been delivered in the parish:

- Site 061 - up to 250 dwellings "executive homes", Sadberge Road, is almost complete. There are no affordable homes on the site. A financial contribution was provided in lieu to DBC for off-site affordable housing. As far as the parish council is aware this has not been provided in the village;
- Site 089 - up to 61 houses, "executive homes", Yarm Road, Oak Tree, has planning permission, but has not commenced. There are no affordable homes, however DBC has indicated that offsite provision will be provided in the village, but no further details have been provided;
- Site 065 - 27 dwellings off Middleton Lane, is under construction. Includes six affordable bungalows at western end (which are built) and 21 "executive homes" at eastern end;
- Site 045 - up to 198 dwellings, rear of Grendon Gardens/High Stell. No affordable housing included in the development that the Parish Council are aware of. Currently phase one is under construction;
- Site 230 - 44 dwellings, Yarm Road - market homes, not "executive". Complete and includes 20% affordable homes onsite;
- Site 384 - 12 houses, Oak Tree, high density housing, largely complete and includes 20% on-site affordable housing; and
- Site 146 - up to 330 dwellings, outline permission obtained which proposes partial onsite affordable provision, and partial offsite (affordable bungalows on site 386).

We reject any notion that in order to deliver the affordable housing and appropriate type of housing needed by the village, that another large development should be granted permission.

We consider that to grant yet another large development is not sustainable.

Rather than building huge housing estates, it would be far better to build smaller sites of affordable housing in the village with the affordable housing contribution from offsite contributions to the Council from executive housing developments already granted permission.

Housing density

Again, notwithstanding the fact that this development is not needed in terms of housing numbers, the proposed density of housing is unjustified and unacceptable. The accompanying car parking spaces it will engender is unacceptable, and this is discussed under the heading on Traffic.

The proposed density of the development is on the upper end of the density spectrum for the Middleton St George area. The Parish Council considers that, just because recent housing permissions have been granted at the upper end of the density scale, does not constitute a good enough reason why the density should be so high. There are densities at Oak Tree of 18dph, 15dph and 8dph. Therefore, the proposal for such a high density development is not justified.

A Design Guide was commissioned as part of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The MSG Design Guide (page 39) provides positive examples of density:

- *The villa types typically found in Oak Tree have a plot that is larger and this allows the landscape to show through, providing a setting to the building and a character context to the neighbourhood based on it;*
- *The Virginia estate has relatively wide plots with front gardens and verges which alter the setting, providing green, spacious streets but can be car dominated.*

Density Setting (page 40 of the MSG Design Guide):

The density of development must consider the adjacent development that it shares boundaries and/ or frontage onto the public realm with so as not to overwhelm or underwhelm, whilst also complementing the street scene.

Page 46 of the MSG Design Guide summarises how new development should appear:

The sensitive growth of Middleton St. George parish as a series of unique villages will only be realised by a continued strong commitment to detail design, sustainability and the focus to deliver developments that respond to the unique character of the village, not just add-on housing estates.

Flood risk

The village is prone to flooding. Although classed as a low risk flooding area (Flood Zone 1), the green field areas experience quite a lot of flooding problems.

According to the DBC PFRA 2011, Darlington has a number of known areas that have historically suffered surface water flooding which include Middleton St George. (Paragraph 5.6.5, DBC Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment April 2019, <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/12584/sd04-darlington-level-1-strategic-flood-risk-assessment-april-2019.pdf>)

Previous housing developments (e.g. Sadberge Road, High Stell, as well as others), as well as those currently being built (e.g. to the rear of High Stell, Land off Yarm Road and Middleton Back Lane, and others), have had to incorporate a lot of remedial measures, including pumping water constantly overnight from the sites. And this is only going to get worse with climate change effects.

We note that the applicant has only assessed for surface water on the site and drainage.

However, the site is next to the Water Park which has three impounded reservoirs where the water is above the level of the site. Any assessment should also take account of the likelihood of flooding to the site should the structure fail and the banks be breached.

In 2019, a housing development for the site to the south of the “High Stell” site and north of the railway line (land to the rear of The Greenway) was submitted (ref.19/00231/OUT). The Flood Risk Assessment for this application assessed the risk from the reservoirs:

Flooding from Infrastructure Failure

Reservoir Failure

4.7.1 The Environment Agency online flood mapping shows the Site is outside the extent of flooding sourced from reservoirs.

4.7.2 Four impounded reservoirs are located 180m north of the Site. The topography between the Site and the reservoirs is such that in the event that one, or more, of the reservoirs were to breach, the Site would be inundated rapidly....All large reservoirs must be inspected and supervised by reservoir panel engineers.

As the enforcement authority for the Reservoirs Act 1975 in England, the Environment Agency ensure that reservoirs are inspected regularly, and essential safety work is carried out.

The Parish Council therefore considers that a structural stability assessment should be submitted by the applicant for this application, based on the proximity of the proposed housing to the reservoirs.

According to Government Guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-assessment-for-planning-applications>) planning applications must include assessments where they could be affected by sources of flooding other than rivers and the sea (for example surface water drains, reservoirs).

Roman Road

The Roman Road, Cade’s Road, runs through this proposed development site. This should not be developed over. The Roman Road, although not listed, is still worthy of protection as a non- designated heritage asset. The NPPF is clear about protection of non-designated heritage assets.

Paragraph 197 of the NPPF: *The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.*

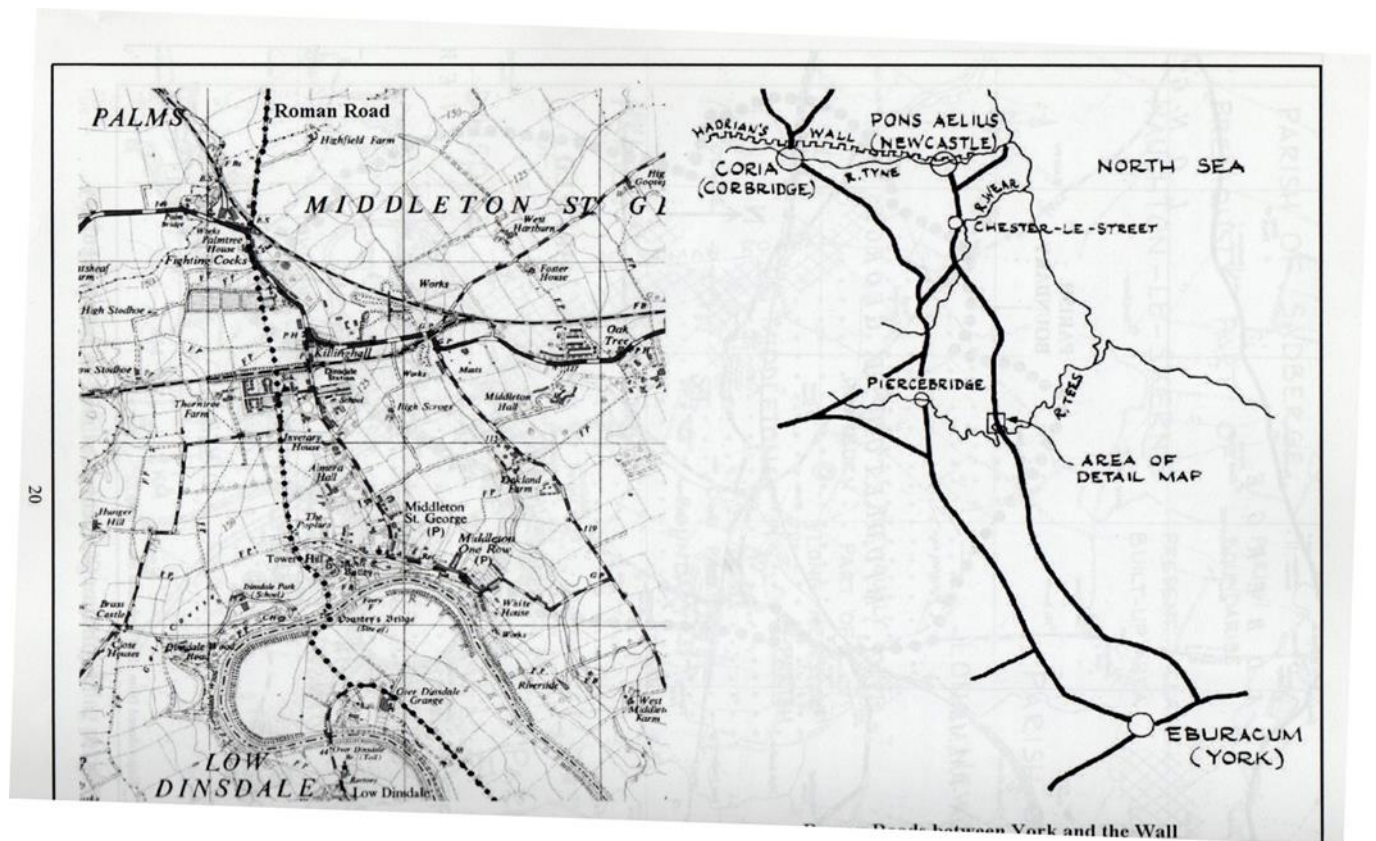
National Planning policy highlights that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and requires them to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Also, that planning decisions affecting a heritage asset are required to be based on a sound understanding of the significance of the asset and the impact of the proposal on that significance.

Policy MSG10 of the Neighbourhood Plan: Heritage Assets – requires that where a development may impact on a heritage asset, applicants should provide information that describes the significance of any heritage assets affected by the proposed development, including any contribution made by their setting. In the determination of development proposals: a. Great weight will be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset and any harm or loss to its significance will require clear and convincing justification in accordance with national policy, and b. A balanced judgement will be required to fully consider the effects of any proposals affecting a non-designated heritage asset, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Therefore, the Roman Road should be conserved in a manner appropriate to its significance, and decision makers must take account of preserving both it and its setting.

"The course of the road by Middleton is well defined by later features which have perpetuated the original line. Fig.4 shows the line of the road in relation to the present village. After crossing the river from the south, the road led up the steep river bank on the course of the present road. This section is shown on earlier Ordnance Survey maps as Pountey's Lane, preserving in corrupted form the name of the supposed bridge. At the point where the modern road turns towards Middleton One Row, the Roman road continues straight on, along a field track known locally as the Black Path. After following another short stretch of present road by Thorntree Gardens, the old road again continues in a straight line marked by the boundaries of twentieth century properties – the school and more recent housing developments. Obliterated for a short distance by the construction of the reservoirs, the Roman road can be seen to recommence on the field opposite Station Road, where it is marked by old hedge line and cultivation ridges. The old road then runs beneath some modern houses, before rejoining the present public road at the point where Palm Tree House Farm stood until relatively recently, just short of the Fighting Cocks Inn. It then continues northwards on the generally straight course of the present road to Sadberge and beyond."

(Excerpt and map below taken from Alan Pallister's book. Middleton St George – Windows on the Evolution of a Tees Valley Parish, published 2007)



Impact on Wildlife and Habitat

This development would have a significant impact on wildlife and habitat. The area is frequented by foxes, barn owls, pheasants, rabbits and heron.

Inaccuracies in the Application Supporting Documents

Unjustifiable Claims in the Design and Access Statement.

Page 4. *The Site forms a sustainable and natural extension to Middleton St George, adjoining the existing built residential form on two sides.*

We dispute that the site is a “sustainable and natural extension to Middleton St George”.

Building on this open, natural landscape, would constitute a further incursion onto green field without any justification.

Page 9. Reference is made to existing local views which are enjoyed by residents along Station Road.

These existing views have been enjoyed by residents along Station Road for many years.

Whilst private views are not a planning consideration, these views are also public views of the countryside, being enjoyed by many villagers and visitors. These public views are from Station Road and Darlington Road south and westwards across to the Water Park and fields further across.

These public views will be destroyed by the proposed development.

Summary

In conclusion, the Parish Council considers that there are substantial grounds for the development application to be refused.

- Outside the current 1997 Local Plan development limits, contrary to Policy E2
- As at the time of the previous proposal, outline application (ref. 16/00976/OUT), when it was due to be considered by the Planning Applications Committee in June 2019, the Council could already evidence a 5 year housing land supply, a reason why the application was not considered at that time. Nothing has changed, in fact the Council can now evidence even more supply since that date. And the Draft Local Plan can be given little or no weight, given the amount of opposition to the housing target and allocations.
- There has been no regard to the Neighbourhood Plan
- The evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan clearly demonstrates that there is no justification for the proposed development (ref. MSG Neighbourhood Plan, and its accompanying Housing Needs Assessment, Settlement Boundary Background Paper, and Design Guide)
- The high density, number and type of dwellings are not appropriate (ref. MSG Neighbourhood Plan, and its accompanying Housing Needs Assessment and Design Guide)
- All the grounds for objection to the original proposals (during the course of 2016 to 2019) are still valid, even more so in fact due to the increased development in the village, and therefore the problems will only worsen. (Traffic congestion and increased road hazards on what are village roads intended for village traffic, encroachment on existing Public Rights of Way, archaeological remains of Cade's Roman Road, impact on existing services such as the GP Practice, and impact on wildlife).

The application should therefore be refused.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Macnab,
Clerk to the Parish Council.

Attachments:

- Traffic Analysis 2019 – Station Road
- Traffic Analysis 2019 – Middleton Lane