



## Tadcaster Town Council

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Open Monday to Thursday 9.30am to 12.30pm

26 October 2022

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### **SELBY DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN – PUBLICATION VERSION CONSULTATION 2022**

#### **RESPONSE OF TADCASTER TOWN COUNCIL**

##### **INTRODUCTION**

Overall Tadcaster Town Council (TTC) welcomes the Local Plan. It offers a step in the right direction to develop Tadcaster into a sustainable, welcoming town with increased footfall, thriving businesses and an active population across all ages. As one of the three designated Service Centres in the Selby area, it is vital that Tadcaster's economy is a sustainable one, enabling the town to fulfil its Service Centre remit to the northern parishes.

TTC approves the emphasis on renovation of dilapidated properties, the provision of new housing of all types, and the pedestrianisation of Kirkgate which will improve the ambience of the town centre.

We have noted, and referred to, the Strategic Priorities detailed in the Selby District Council Corporate Plan which are published under the four headings of Live, Enjoy, Grow and Great Value.

However, we feel it important to flag up from the start that, while many of the Local Plan proposals are just what the town needs, we are concerned that:-

- The Local Plan is proposing a minimum of 400 houses which we assume includes bringing back empty properties into use. Clarification is needed on how many of the proposed 400 will be new-builds and how many will be the existing empty properties. If empty property 'reclamations' account for 30 (ref Local Plan para 12.12), then London Road is projected to deliver negative housing growth! What number is actually anticipated to be delivered on 'London Road Special Policy Area' site – Policy T3 (P191-2)?
- We also seek clarification on why the indicative housing yield for Tadcaster has been reduced from 447 in the Preferred Options Local Plan to 372 in the Publication Local Plan – a substantial reduction and surely not in line with the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). TTC is of the view that if anything, more than the originally proposed 447 houses are required, not less.
- There needs to be more encouragement for new businesses to develop/ settle in the town, without which long term sustainability will struggle. We note that new Policy T3 (P191-2) –for the 'London Road Special Policy Area' now allows for new commercial and retail development on the site. However, the adopted Local Plan identified land at Low Moor,

adjacent York Road, as a 'Significant Employment Permission'. Why has this never been implemented/why dropped from plan? We suggest this should be re-visited.

- Tadcaster would benefit from more visitors and tourists and from hotel accommodation to promote this. For your information, the emerging NP has a draft policy addressing this, but no site is identified.
- Transport - in order for Tadcaster to fulfil its Service Centre remit to surrounding villages, it is essential that local transport facilities – including town centre parking – are given a higher priority.
- New housing, employment, hotel/tourist facilities will require improvements in the local infrastructure – particularly to the road network around the town.
- All residents of Tadcaster – and visitors – find the derelict buildings all around the town distressing. Whatever is finally decided on in terms of development, it is the firmly held view of the Council that refurbishments of *all* derelict properties must be completed *before* other changes are made; and that there be a strictly defined timeline for progress and legally agreed protections on all sides. It is noted that in para 12.12, re Policy T1, reference is made to bringing “*back into use about 30 dwellings above those identified as housing allocations*”. TTC feels this number is vague and seeks more definite assurances on the timescale for renovations and which properties – precisely – will be improved and to what extent. See further comments below in relation to Policy T2/Housing Allocation TADC-H.
- The entire strategy for Tadcaster would be seriously undermined if it proved impossible to create the underground car park. Many voices are saying that this could be impossible because of the nature of the ground beneath the current car park/Town Green. The Local Plan itself clearly states (paras 12.6 and 12.8) that the strategy is an “interdependent package of proposals” and that “the allocations are presented as a package of sites.... closely related to each other in terms of ownership and availability”. We need assurances that failure to deliver on the Central Area Car Park site/underground car park would not stop the rest of the plan and that all the other important improvements would go ahead. This must be legally assured with the landowner. See further comments below in relation to Policy T2/Housing Allocation TADC-H

## **SPECIFIC POLICY COMMENTS**

### **TADC-H: Chapel Street/Central Area Car Park**

While building on the central car park would not have been Tadcaster Town Council's preferred way forward, it is appreciated that compromise is needed on all sides to make progress, and the provision of an underground car park is an innovative and imaginative solution. In principle TTC supports this idea, but we have the following reservations:

#### 1. Regarding car parking:

- the new underground car park will have to provide for the new houses (which are likely to have up to 2 vehicles per property), for town centre shoppers, for tourist visitors and for people who patronise the new shops and restaurants we hope to see on the pedestrianised Kirkgate. So there needs to be *more* spaces than currently offered in the ground level car park. Perhaps these can be provided elsewhere in the town centre, but this needs to be clearly specified.
- in order to take pressure off the underground car park each of the new dwellings should have a designated car parking space with electric charging facilities.
- what consideration is being given to residents of Chapel Street who currently park on the central car park?
- Could at least part of the proposed Town Green area become parking space for the Chapel Street residents and users of the Riley Smith Hall and the shops opposite?

- One important suggestion is that the big car park owned by Tadcaster Albion be brought into the mix. It is in an ideal position to support the High Street.

2. In the opinion of TTC, the proposed number of dwellings (43) is too many. Ideally, each home would have its own, personal outdoor space for private recreation, gardening (even on a small scale) and clothes drying. What is the actual area of the site proposed for development? Is it still 0.66ha as originally proposed? It appears this new development is being seen as a town site where higher housing densities are accepted but we would like clarification of the thinking behind this. Tadcaster is a small place and not a typically “urban” setting.

3. The development will set much of the tone for the new, revitalised town centre and should contain a lot of greenery – trees and year-round planting.

4. The idea of opening the currently unused green space to the public is much overdue and very much welcomed.

5. The underground car park proposal is clearly pivotal to the delivery of the Central Area Car Park site and indeed the town centre strategy as a whole. Paragraph 12.5 refers to the need for “further technical work”. Given the obvious importance of this site/proposal and the issues of flood risk/groundwater set out in policy clause 12 (P195), TTC considers that such technical work, to establish the feasibility of the underground car park proposal, must be undertaken as part of Local Plan work and not be left to developers at planning application stage.

6. Again, given this site’s key importance to town centre strategy, the TTC feels strongly that the scope/reach of the legal agreements referred to on P195 (bullet point e.) should extend to the bringing back into use of vacant properties/sites, as referred to in Policy T1 clause 7 – they are understood to be in the same ownership – and encompass site/scheme/strategy delivery irrespective of whether the underground car park is proved to be feasible or not.

However, as part of an overall improvement plan for the town we do not categorically oppose developing the central car park space.

### **Robin Hood’s Yard**

TTC notes that the policy applying to this space that existed in the previous LP draft has been removed. Instead, there is a reference in T1.6 to a *“new multi-functional green space in Robin Hood’s Yard (and safe access to it for all users), for the purposes of linking the town centre to the riverside for pedestrians and cyclists. Part of the area could provide some limited parking and servicing for surrounding residents and businesses subject to proven highway safety and high quality”*.

TTC believes the policy is too vague an aspiration for this important town centre site and seeks clarification. Why has detailed reference to it been removed and what, in detail, are the current proposals?

### **TADC-I: Land at Mill Lane.**

The housing development here is much welcomed, particularly as there is an emphasis on creating a design in keeping with the heritage of the town. The inclusion of green spaces and the enhancement of the local Public Rights of Way/cycle network are further plus points. However, we would draw attention to the increased traffic that would be using Mill Lane, and that continued easy access to the supermarket is important. In order to mitigate this increased traffic on Mill Lane an additional, alternative vehicle access should be provided, to connect in some way to Wighill Lane.

The original housing scheme for this site, as submitted in 2012 (the ‘Wharfebank’ application), included provision for a hydro-electric power scheme. Such scope still exists and TTC supports the

re-visiting of this idea. It would be in line with Local Plan Policy SG10 and the stand-alone emerging NP policy on a River Wharfe Hydroelectric Scheme.

Finally, TTC support the re-inclusion of some public car parking element at the town centre end of this site to meet the perceived need for more spaces close to the town centre.

#### **TADC-AD: Fircroft and Former Barnardo's Home, Wighill Lane.**

The Council view development of this site as a good thing. The refurbishment of the existing buildings will be a positive addition to the town.

However, Tadcaster badly needs a high quality, modern hotel for business and tourism and TTC suggests that a refurbished Fircroft would be a possible solution. We put this idea forward – Tadcaster Fircroft Hotel - in the hope that it will be seriously considered.

#### **TADC-L: Rear of 46 Wighill Lane and former coal yard.**

This proposed provision of houses, including some refurbishment of empty properties, is welcome. We query the high number of homes proposed – 10 suggests a high density on the now reduced size of site – but as we have not seen detailed plans it is too early to take a view. But certainly the improvement of this area and the housing provision are much needed.

#### **TADC-AE: Land off Hillcrest Court (aka Butch's Field)**

Again, new housing is a good thing. However, this site is surrounded by existing dwellings and account must be taken of how this development would affect them; and, of course, the access issues may present a challenge.

#### **TADC-J: Land at Station Road**

Again, residential development is welcome. TTC welcome the idea of sympathetically planned housing incorporating residential parking, garden spaces and landscaping. We suggest that a small number of retail units be included in the design to allow for a newsagent/grocery store and café; these amenities would be of use to many residents at that end of Tadcaster and provide a local focus.

#### **Land at London Road Policy T3**

The policy for this area has changed since the last LP draft. TTC asks why this change has been made?

This most recent policy is very vague referring to a “mix of uses” including retail, commercial, parking or residential. It is unclear what specific local needs the policy now seeks to address and that appears the area has been designated a “catch-all”. While not opposing such a policy in principle - which could be a good thing if properly managed – TTC seeks clarification on the ultimate ambition for this site.

Is it intended that some of this land will “provide for a new primary access onto the A162 London Road to the east”? (NP TC.2 pp 191). TTC considers this wording to be ambiguous/ unclear. The problem with this junction as it exists today is that traffic cannot exit the A64 onto the A162 from the east bound carriageway or access the west bound A64 carriageway from the A162. Policy wording needs to clearly reflect these needs, in effect creating a full ‘clover leaf’ junction, i.e. full access/egress in all directions.

### **Vision for Tadcaster:**

The aspirations of the Vision are overall desirable and welcome.

The biggest blight and restriction on the prosperous development of Tadcaster is the huge number of derelict properties. This, above all, must be rectified and must follow the conservation-led approach using various local materials.

Implementing this crucial element of the LP relies on the cooperation of the major landowner and, apparently, allowing building on the central car park with the spaces being replaced by an underground space.

TTC believes this approach is invalid unless engineering feasibility studies confirm the viability of such an idea. Without that categorical assurance *before* the adoption of the LP, the whole LP would be unworkable.

### **Policy T1: Tadcaster Town Centre Regeneration Area**

TTC note this important new policy and approve the aspiration to meet the Vision for Tadcaster at the earliest possible date. We have the following comments on individual points:

1. 2040 is a distant date and we hope and expect that significant improvements can be achieved before then. Many of Tadcaster's woes arise from the large number of dilapidated empty properties and these could be brought back into use well before 2040. Every empty home and commercial space handicaps our prosperity.
2. As previously said, TTC is not in principle against building on the central car park as long as it is done sympathetically and with due regard paid to:
  - the effect on other residents close by, particularly those on Chapel Street who are likely to be adversely affected;
  - the need for outdoor space for the individual use of the new residents;
  - the number of car parking spaces available to the town centre as a whole.

TTC recognises that this latest version of the Local Plan suggests that the car parking question can be solved by the provision of an underground car park, but many voices have raised doubts about the viability of this plan and TTC shares those concerns. Please see remarks above (in paras headed Chapel Street/Central Area Car Park and Vision for Tadcaster).

Further, TTC seeks assurances that all steps will be taken to ensure the protection of existing town centre residents and of the rest of the town centre users.

3. The policy provides for bringing the Town Green back into communal use which is to be welcomed as it is currently an unused and wasted space. But it is a large piece of land and TTC believes that, besides offering a community open space, part of the green could be used for more, landscaped, parking spaces.
4. Our remarks on the proposed change of use of the current central car park are laid out in point 2 above.
5. TTC seeks clarification on what the Developer Agreements entail. Who would be party to these and what are the safeguards to protect Tadcaster?
6. The aspiration of this policy is unclear as "multi-functional" is not defined.
7. The policy to bring derelict properties back into use is very welcome. But why only 30 properties? There are more than that and we would like to see them specified.

8. The policy of creating a pedestrian-priority and low traffic system on Westgate and Kirkgate is very welcome. TTC have no objections to this but draw attention to the needs of current property owners (particularly on St Joseph Street) who may be adversely affected.
9. This policy is welcome. We need better transport infrastructure in general.
10. This policy is also welcome.
11. This policy is also welcome.

### **Policy HG6. Creating the Right Type of Homes**

TTC are of the opinion that a minimum of 35 dwelling per hectare in Tadcaster would be too dense. Ours is a small town and not a conventional urban setting. Further, most people now cherish some personal outdoor space and a density of 35 dwellings or more per hectare would be out of keeping with the community.

### **CONCLUSION:**

The Town Council is very pleased that discussions have opened between all interested parties about how to build on Tadcaster's many existing assets and to lay groundwork for a thriving, sustainable future.

Central to this is the refurbishment of ALL the derelict properties and their return to use as either residential or commercial uses. This must be done first.

That being said, our three main priorities are,

1. That adequate new homes are created and that these are a mix of ALL currently dilapidated houses and new-builds which together will meet the needs of buyers of affordable-homes and those with deeper pockets.
2. That there is sustainable employment provision, and we question whether the London Road site proposal is sufficient to address the town's employment development needs.
3. and that the commercial centre of the town (including a pedestrianised Kirkgate) is supported with easy access for shoppers, diners, and other visitors - which means parking provision.

In conclusion, Tadcaster Town Council is committed to preserving the history and heritage of Tadcaster while moving seamlessly into a carbon-neutral 21<sup>st</sup> century future of local employment and commerce, tourism and leisure which will support all the northern parishes.

In order to achieve this we hope and expect that note will continue to be taken of the Strategic Priorities in Selby's Council Plan.