Objection to PN19

While one appreciates the need to plan for further housing in the borough of Harrogate, the latest proposals are a knee-jerk reaction to an increase in projected numbers that at best are subjective and at worst just paying lip service to an assumed general increase. The figures are unproven, unsafe and therefore unsound. HBC has failed to investigate other alternatives in depth but has opted either for development on land it “inherited” or via landowners wanting to make a financial killing.

Instead of attempting to urbanise villages, HBC should look at new sites that would solve the housing needs at a stroke. Remember, this plan is for up to 2035 not over the next 5 years. They have ignored their own SHELAA classifications and gone for instant land grab instead of looking at other sites or even reclassification of land status where better locations may be available.

The Ministry of Defence will be quitting its sites at Dishforth in the not too distant future yet this brownfield sites hasn’t been considered. I’m no planner but would consider a significant number of homes on this site to be easily attainable. The principle of a brand-new town, say 5000 houses, somewhere along the A1M corridor would be an ideal solution but that doesn’t appear to feature in HBC’s plans despite many successes of similar developments across the country. Has no-one even been to look at Cambourne in Cambridgeshire as an example (<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/content/cambourne>)? It was built from scratch with completely new infrastructure. Here in Harrogate, the attitude is to swamp villages and get the money from S106 and CIL payments to modify infrastructure afterwards - when it’s too late.

In HBC’s recent documentation it states PN18 and PN19 replace PN14 and PN16. It doesn’t just do that; it more than doubles them. It would appear the concept is to build houses on PN19 and then provide employment for those residents across the road in PN18 although everyone knows it doesn’t work like that anymore. The result is likely to be a phenomenal increase in traffic along the already congested A61 and add to the daily gridlock in Pannal and Burn Bridge villages. Nowhere in any of the plans does the documentation mention infrastructure, in particular road traffic density, which is already more than the roads were designed for or can cope with.

PN19 is located within the active floodplain of the River Crimple – a main river as classified by the Environment Agency. Hence the area is already prone to river water flooding. In addition to this, by introducing impermeable surfaces like roads, building foundations and the like, the likelihood of surface water flooding would be increased dramatically. This would have the devastating effect of increasing the area liable to flooding, not only in PN19 but also further down the river in PN18 as well. In their own environmental study, this criterion is only given an orange rating despite the statement in the Land Drainage Site Assessment, “However, Crimple Beck flows through the site that is known to have significant capacity issues both upstream & downstream. In my view, development adjacent to Crimple Beck should be avoided”. How much clearer than that does one want. HBC’s apparent denial of flooding considerations in proposing building on PN19 patently does not take into account any of the already approved developments that will create even more rainwater run-off into Clark Beck and the River Crimple and consequent fluvial flooding risk downstream.

Objection to development of particular sites in isolation doesn’t give the opportunity to show the cumulative effects of all building to the west of Harrogate. The lack of a suitable road network doesn’t seem to have been considered. Traffic from PN19 would have to exit the site via a bridge over the River Crimple onto the A61 as access and egress within the village of Pannal would be totally impractical, unsafe and make congestion permanent rather than mainly at peak periods.

Traffic from sites near Otley Road (from circa 3000 houses) would regularly depart from that area towards Leeds and Bradford and workers from around those cities would make the reverse journey to work in Harrogate’s tourist industry (hotels, conference and exhibition trades). On HBC’s Sustainability Appraisal Addendum for PN19 there is not one red status block regarding traffic. This makes a mockery of the whole appraisal as it is deemed not to affect Pannal and Burn Bridge when everyone knows it does. The appraisal only looks at PN19 in isolation as if there were no other external influences with traffic flow (or gridlock). A separate traffic model for the whole area, not just near PN19, is an absolute necessity with terms of reference defined by residents rather than planners who have assiduously ignored the overall effect.

One wonders why none of the objections made by residents in the 2016 consultation appear to have been taken into account. The additional sites have only accentuated the problems that PN14 would have caused. Why, when the Dunlopillo site has yet to be redeveloped for housing and employment use, is there a sudden additional requirement for more employment area when that near the A1/A59 junction isn’t even ready? The Sustainability Appraisal Addendum also states the school is at or near capacity now (red status) and that is before the Dunlopillo site has been developed with another circa 130 houses. To add another 275 houses with the associated number of children would be the height of folly. In the same document, in the biodiversity section it states that the impacts of the views of the Environment Agency cannot be anticipated yet. They most certainly can be anticipated and with confidence one can expect them to be extremely negative with no real chance of any mitigation.

The proposal to take land set aside for allotments (one of the few areas probably not liable to flooding in PN19) for extending educational facilities (PN20) would only be as a consequence of unwanted and unneeded extra housing. The area designated for the park and stride facility just behind Saint Robert’s church (which we understand has already been discussed by the Parish Council and HBC’s planning department) has again been listed as available for housing.

This and all other areas in Pannal appearing in these additional proposals are Special Landscape Areas. The very meaning of this designation is as its name implies, special - and according to HBC’s own planners and a government inspector, should not be used for development purposes. Is one part of the planning department not speaking to another? There is a good argument to have this land reclassified as green belt to avoid any coalescence between Pannal and Harrogate and between Spring Lane, Burn Bridge and Harrogate. However, the SLA status should preclude any development.