

We would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to make a statement in support of this development, which we believe will make a positive contribution to Belford. It is our vision to deliver a high-quality development which enhances the village for the benefit of both existing and future residents. We fully support the Officer's recommendation for approval, and thank him for a balanced report which accurately summarises the key issues.

Throughout the application process we have worked collaboratively with your team of Officers to develop a project that will deliver a range of economic, social and environmental benefits for both the local community and the County.

We are grateful to the Officers to have continued to work in such a way despite all the challenges that Covid-19 has brought us all.

One key issue that this pandemic has shown us is the importance of beautiful, well designed homes, which should be available to all people. We are proud that the scheme will deliver 27% affordable housing. This significantly exceeds the Council's policy requirement of 17%. Furthermore, two of these affordable homes will be bungalows, which are all too rare in new developments, and where offered have often been traded for a lower overall contribution. This represents a key positive contribution for the area.

The proposed layout also includes generous open space provision. The site would benefit from an innovative design code which specifies the use of local materials to reflect the best of local design, as demonstrated in the supporting documents, and which will genuinely enhance and complement the village.

The site itself is a logical and self-contained parcel of land which is bordered on three sides by existing development. It is well connected to surrounding infrastructure and amenities. It offers strong links by foot and cycle to the centre of the village - yet will create minimal additional vehicle journeys and even fewer through the village centre and other residential areas.

The site is free from the restrictive flooding and conservation designations which affect the land to the north and east of the village, and as such it is our view that it is the most sustainable site in Belford.

We have worked hard to ensure that all environmental and social impacts have been assessed, and where required, adequate mitigation is proposed.

Although it is regrettable that the Parish Council do not feel able to support the application, we do believe that their concerns have been robustly addressed in both the Officer's Committee Report and the detailed technical documents. It is notable that no other statutory consultee has offered any objection.

The NPPF supports and encourages the provision of good design; the delivery of new homes - particularly affordable housing; and small and medium size developments. We believe that this application meets the definition of 'sustainable development' as defined by national policy and substantiated by your Officer's report.

The Northumberland Local Plan designates Belford as a Service Centre, and therefore a location where new development should be targeted. It is worth noting that part of the site is currently allocated for development, and that the Local Plan provides for 120 new homes in Belford during the Plan period. Therefore, this proposal is consistent with both current and emerging policy.

Importantly, the development would support the vitality of existing services such as the local schools and shops on the High Street, whilst providing a contribution to mitigate any impact upon health facilities. It would also deliver public realm improvements, notably on South Road.

In conclusion, this is a well-designed, high quality and sustainable development which offers significant benefits over and above policy requirements. We hope that you support your Officer's recommendation and approve the application.

Thank you for your time.