

STATEMENT – Dr R. Hildyard
Revised Jan 18th.

I wish to comment on the strategic principles in the Core Strategy and examine their prioritization in terms of the areas proposed for future development. In particular I would like to question whether these principles are properly applied and embodied in the map of the Catterick Garrison area shown in Fig 8, p37 of the Core Strategy document, which in the absence of a Site Allocation plan is likely to become a definitive guide for future development.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Given the principles expressed in the Core Strategy it is questionable why the land to the north of the main road in the angle between the A6136 Catterick Road and the west lane leading to Colburn Village, (the 10 acre area, formerly the Army Sports Field – hereafter “the Old Sports Field”) does not appear to be included in the hatched area designated for development (Core Strategy, Fig 8, p.37). (Note that the map at Fig 8 is apparently deliberately ‘fuzzy’ and does not show exact boundaries.)

On all the criteria which make up the governing principles of the Core Strategy the Old Sports Field should be a prime area for development, and indeed a better one on many counts than much of the area south of the A6136 that has been included in the hatched development zone:

1. It is the closest significant potential development area to the town centre
2. It is highly sustainable, being close to public transport links, shops, services and employment.
3. It is semi-brownfield: the site was levelled and underlaid with clinker by the MoD., and is therefore unsuitable for agricultural use.
4. It is self-contained and easy of access, and will not impact significantly on any pre-existing residential area.

The only reason for not including is presumed to be the note in the Strategy [para 3.2.13 (5) (b)] about maintaining separation belts between the various settlements that make up the Catterick Garrison – in this case Hipswell and Colburn.

In terms of the Examination I am therefore raising two questions:

- I. Does this ‘separation belt’ policy have greater priority and more importance than the principles that are said to be at the heart of the Core Strategy and the NPPF?
- II. How does the Old Sports Field site compare to the area south of the A6136 that has been zoned for development in terms of the principles and criteria laid down in the Core strategy?

It is these two questions I would now like to discuss more fully.

I. Issues affecting a 'separation belt'

On the separation belt policy itself I would like to make a number of points. It is of course in itself not an unreasonable policy but there are qualifications as to how important it is and whether it should apply to the Sports Field.

1. At para 3.1.16 it is acknowledged that 'coalescence' between the garrison and the three villages of Scotton, Hipswell and Colburn has already occurred creating the new settlement of Catterick Garrison with "*a new town centre emerging*". A precedent has already been created by permitting development along the full length of the south side of the A6136, connecting Hipswell and Colburn. (The development at the 'Hipswell' end of the Sports field is actually part of Colburn parish, so strictly speaking it is a connection within Colburn not between the two villages.) And if Hipswell, Scotton and Colburn are now part of Catterick Garrison, a brownfield site within walking distance of facilities should be a preferred option.
2. Although some Councillors have espoused the idea of a separation belt I suspect there is little concern about separation gaps between settlements amongst local people resident in the area, (with the single exception of the gap between Colburn Village and Colburn Town which the village residents are keen to maintain). I suspect indeed there might actually be much greater popular opposition from residents of the Chase estate to potential developments to the south of the A6136 along Sour Beck.
3. If the Sport Field were included in the development area there would still be a significant 'green' gap even at the greatest point of pressure along the north side of the main road consisting of a block of woodland, the farmstead of Colburn Grange and two fields.
4. The substantial and important separation belt between Colburn and Hipswell is the farmland of Grange Farm between Colburn Town and the west lane to the north of the Old Sports Field. ~~(And further west the 'gill' of Cottagers Beck/Coburn Beck (both belonging almost entirely to one agricultural holding). [MAP NEEDED AT THIS POINT])~~ Effectively it is the integrity of this unit that must be protected if the gap, and the significant landscape and conservation assets of the Cottagers Beck/Coburn Beck 'gill', are to be preserved. If there was one breach in this block of land it would be very difficult to resist further development at any points from the existing Colburn Lane housing right up to the west lane, and then indeed towards closing the gap with Colburn Village. In turn this would have knock-on damaging effects to the 'conservation assets' of the Swale Valley immediately to the north.
5. Inclusion of the Sports Field in the development area would make the Grange Farm block MORE defensible as the following points demonstrate. It would show that development has been permitted where reasonable and sustainable, and by blocking off the remainder of the Grange Farm area it would make it easier to resist westward expansion from Colburn Town without full and proper consideration.
6. As mentioned above the Sports Field is semi-brownfield – that is to say it was used as an Army recreation ground from 1923 to 1998. There were sports pavilions (now demolished) with services that are still marked by manholes (mains water and sewers) and there is a substantial area of tarmac and concrete.

The field was graded to create two level playing fields at different levels with a bank between them, was underlaid with clinker and is consequently unsuitable for arable (a crop of wheat was attempted unsuccessfully in 2009). As grass it is marginal and has been difficult to rent either for grazing or mowing because of its poor quality and being subject to trespass, fly-tipping and other nuisances. (It has been rented two years out of fifteen in my ownership) It is not part of the Grange Farm holding and it is distinctly possible that it would fall into dereliction if as is entirely likely a tenant could not be found.

7. The Sports Field is also physically and visually distinct from the farmland to its north. It is a self-contained quadrilateral bounded by the two roads, the block of woodland and a substantial bank with a thick hedge to the north cutting it off from the farmland. A careful observer will see that it is much lower than the land to the north and has been levelled into two flat areas with a graded bank between the two. The non-agricultural treebelts could also be utilized to enhance a suburban development.
8. The main A6136 Catterick road is the principal artery between the A1, Catterick Garrison, Richmond and the Dales, and is likely to get much busier with the A1 upgrade in the next couple of years. Effectively the area alongside it already is 'developed' or urbanized in terms of traffic, noise, disturbance, visual effects. A residential development of the Sports Field would simply complete what is already happening and would seal off this urbanized area from the countryside to the north.
9. The main A6136 Catterick road is likely to need upgrading as a consequence of the A1 and this could best be done in conjunction with development of the Sports Field site. The development could facilitate improvements to the existing roundabout on Catterick Road south of the site which is substandard and would thus improve the free flow of traffic on the A6136.

II Comparison with the area south of the A6136

If the 'separation belt' idea is not a convincing reason to exclude the Old Sports Field, nor does the comparison with the area south of the A6136 suggest any advantages over the Sports Field. Section 3.2.9 openly states that this designation implies greenfield development: "*This assessment supports a 'town centre first' strategy, which prioritises development within the built-up area close to the town centre, preferably on previously developed land, and extending south eastwards from there ultimately into an area of greenfield land*". It goes on to argue that the existing green corridor of Sour Beck can be enhanced and flood risk issues can be mitigated, though a neutral observer might be permitted to be somewhat sceptical as to whether either of these will be feasible, sustainable and economic in practice. If we do an objective comparison between the Old Sports Field site north of the A6136 and the area to the south of the A6136 around Sour Beck and stretching out into open countryside it is evident that the Old Sports Field scores more favourably on each one of the following criteria:

- Closeness to town centre
- Sustainability (notably closeness to shops, services, employment and transport)
- Access points to existing road network
- Greenfield vs semi-brownfield

- Protection of green corridor
- Flood risk issues
- Infrastructure upgrade (esp. highways)

On all these points the southern area around and beyond Sour Beck manifestly scores less highly than the Sports Field which should arguably therefore be given priority in development terms.

CONCLUSION

If, as RDC seem to be suggesting currently, demand for housing land in the Garrison is much lower than anticipated, then it is preferable to progress development of the Sports Field before the much trickier and more environmentally valuable area that is unambiguously greenfield around and beyond Sour Beck. If on the other hand there is a shortage of housing sites in the plan period I would suggest it would be a mistake to have excluded the Sports Field from future development. In either case the Sports Field should be included in the area for potential development identified in Fig. 8 of the Core Strategy.

**Addendum to Dr. R. Hildyard's Statement for Richmondshire District Council's Local Plan Examination in Public
The Sports Field Site, Colburn**

Chronology/Site History

The total site area is 4.305 hectares, this includes both the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHLEAA) (2010 updated 2013) sites 56, (3.721 hectares) and 58 (0.584 hectares).

The site, known as and identified in the SHLEAA as "The Old Sports Field" comprises a single field north of Catterick Road and east of Colburn Lane, Colburn. The land was originally part of Colburn Grange Farm. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) acquired the field by a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) in 1923. To develop the site for sports purposes the then MOD lowered the land from the level of the surrounding farmland and covered most of the site with clinker. There was some hardsurfacing at the western part of the site where changing rooms, toilets and a pavilion were developed. The site was served by a sewer and had a water supply. These buildings have now been demolished, but the foundations and hardstandings remain on site. The use as a sports field ceased in 1998 when the then MOD sold the site. The current use is for grazing, however attempts to find tenants for the land have failed because of its poor agriculturally land quality and condition following its former use.



TOTAL SITE AREA 4.305 ha



Richmondshire District Council's Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment 2010 (SHELAA) and Land Supply Sites (2013).

The 2010 SHELAA included both sites (58 and 56), as suitable for inclusion as reserve housing supply land for years 11–15. The Council's Land Supply Sites, (April 2013), which provides a updated land supply list to the 2010 SHELAA, says in the details under Site ID No 56:–

“Old Sports Field, Catterick Garrison

Also 58. Two adjacent sites. A derelict play area occupies a small part of the land which would need to be replaced as part of the development. CP4 enables.”

It estimates a total yield of 120 dwellings , 30 delivered in year 4, (2016), 30 in Year 5, (2017), 30 in 2018 and 30 in 2019.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. The NPPF says that for decision-taking this means:

- approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
- where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
 - specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

The current Richmondshire Local Plan (1999 – 2006) is silent on the subject of this site, (see inset map in Appendix A) and under the regime of this plan, in the light of the above advice as a sustainable development proposal, permission could reasonably be granted if assessment shows that the development would not have any adverse impacts which would significantly outweigh the benefits.

Core Strategy

Figure 8 in the Core Strategy, (see Appendix B), shows land to the south of Catterick Road as a Strategic Development Growth Area and land to the north of the road between Catterick and Colburn undeveloped. The plan offers no justification as to why it is acceptable to allow settlements to merge on the south side of Catterick Road, but not on the north.

The land shown in Figure 8 in the Core Strategy, (Appendix B), south of Catterick Road as a Strategic Development Growth Area is lower than the land to the north of the road and the central part is affected by the flooding of the Sour Beck as shown in Appendix C in the extract

from the Environment Agency's Flood Map. This would severely constrain and restrict the land's development potential and capability to accommodate strategic growth.

The land to the north of the Catterick Road and in particular the Old Sports Field site is not so constrained and is in a more sustainable location than the land allocated in the plan in that it is closer to the road and footpath network connecting the site to local community and social facilities, shops, schools and bus stops and it is a brownfield site on previously developed land.

Paragraph 3.2.9 of the Core Strategy says:-

“The Catterick Garrison town centre development provides the key focus for strategic housing and economic development in Richmondshire. The constraints and opportunities for new development have been assessed for all areas around Catterick Garrison (Hipswell, Scotton and Colburn: Development Search Areas and Strategic Directions of Development, 2011). This assessment supports a ‘town centre first’ strategy, which prioritises development within the built-up area close to the town centre, preferably on previously developed land, and extending south eastwards from there ultimately into an area of greenfield land. A strategic growth area is defined (Figure 8), which is well related to the existing landscape and complements the existing settlement pattern. This area benefits from several access points to the existing road network and is not seriously affected by flooding. The existing green corridors alongside Sour Beck would be maintained by high quality and well landscaped development and strategic flood risk assessment of development proposals will be required to ensure flood risk issues in the area are fully investigated and provided for.”

The designation pre-judges the outcome of the Flood Risk Assessment which may indicate that development is not appropriate on parts of the site and this could prejudice the strategic objectives of the Plan.

Recent flooding east of this location on the A1 and land to the east may be attributable to increased run off from new development into the Sour Beck/Brough Beck and any Flood Risk Assessment should examine the wider implications of development in this location for flood risk.

Access

Para 2.4 says:-

“Hipswell, Scotton and Colburn – including the Catterick Garrison main military site is generally known as Catterick Garrison. This masks a complicated area that has evolved through the growth of military facilities, which have coalesced with the settlements. The building of a Tesco superstore and more recently a major leisure centre has begun to create a town centre that will continue to develop with the proposals for further redevelopment in the same area. Retail evidence shows that the impact of the superstore extends across the whole District. Although there is a strong military character to this area it is not exclusive and there are now large areas of open market housing following disposal of military accommodation and development on former military land. Colburn is the largest domestic settlement offering a range of housing and other services. A number of employment locations have been developed mainly in Colburn. The area has grown around the A6136 and there are concerns about the capacity of this road which is subject to some congestion at peak times. The Catterick Garrison Strategic Transport Assessment (2010) has reviewed this and concluded that the capacity of the road can be

increased to meet future development requirements with a set of specific junction improvements.”

The proposed access to the site would be from a new roundabout on Catterick Road. This would replace the existing substandard roundabout at the developers cost, thus improving the free flow and safety of traffic on Catterick Road without resource to the public purse.

Issues

Does the Core Strategy emphasise the need to retain the distinctive identity of Colburn (as well as Hipswell and Scotton) in relation to the remainder of the Garrison?

Figure 8 allocates growth south of Catterick Road which merges Catterick, Scotton and Colburn.

Paragraph 3.2.3 says:-

“Catterick Garrison is a complicated place where the three villages of Hipswell, Scotton and Colburn, plus the Catterick Garrison main site have coalesced.”

Does the site protect and enhance the green infrastructure of the area?

Paragraph 2.23 says:-

“The plan area is rich in its green infrastructure, encompassing extensive habitats, major landscape features such as river corridors and flood meadows, along with wide green corridors and ecological networks. The Tees, Swale and Ure river corridors are important wildlife habitats, as are the upland moorland areas, all supporting the locally rich biodiversity. Numerous

areas, sites and other features provide a network of nature conservation resources spread across the plan area.”

The site of the former playing field is previously developed land and is not rich in biodiversity, much of the original nature of the site having been destroyed. It is therefore less sensitive to change than other undisturbed land in the locality.

It is not designated as of recognised importance of nature conservation or landscape interest.

Attachments

Appendices A –C