

**To: S MacGarvie &Co
Planning Consultants**

**From: THORNHILL COMMUNITY TRUST – Response to Inverdunning / WS Dunsire
Community Consultation – November 2020**

Background and Principles

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the proposal following the further information provided on the website and the online Q&A session on 14th October. This response represents the collective view of the Thornhill Community Trust and has been the subject of a Special Members Meeting held on 3rd November 2020, which focused on the principles of the development.

The community view this as a major speculative development of housing and industrial units with the attempted justification through the need of one local Thornhill business to expand / re-locate. We do not have the clarification which we sought regarding the involvement of the various parties: the landowner, Inverdunning, WS Dunsire, JCC and Partners.

The inclusion of potential community space as part of the proposals has given the community some important issues to consider, especially at this time of pandemic and climate emergency. A village Zoom meeting on 17th August attracted 35 people representing community groups, businesses and individuals interested in the future of the village post-pandemic. The TCT has passed a resolution at its Special Members Meeting to set up a group to look at the future aspirations of the village and so contribute the community's views to the forthcoming Local Development Plan (LDP) consultations. Over the coming months and years it is likely that some of our ways of living and working will change for good. We would wish Thornhill to have a vision for the future that is vibrant, viable and sustainable and most importantly that the village has a sound basis for judging proposals that may come forward from developers. Some priorities which have already been highlighted include: low carbon building; walking and cycling routes in and around the village; traffic management and air quality on the Main Street; community amenities; opportunities to respond to the climate crisis and community employment and wealth-building developments.

This response relates to the Pre-Application Presentation: *'Relocation of JCC Agricultural Business and Proposed Sustainable Expansion'*.

The presentation on the website includes a brief report with drawings identifying agricultural land on the north side of the A873, to be developed in two broad zones: there is an indicative layout of about 73 houses on the east part of the field with access opposite Back

Yetts and a zone for industrial use on the west part with an access point at the bend in the road. There are proposals for the existing JCC workshop site with a 'visualisation', and bullet points from supporting reports. The community is invited to respond through six yes / no questions online. Some questions were answered via a live Q&A session online on October 14, 2020.

We doubt that the responses to these six questions will result in any valid community feedback, as several of the questions are leading. Moreover, the vague way in which these questions are phrased will make it difficult or impossible to discern whether responses refer specifically to the development in question, or to more general principles and opinions.

The Thornhill Community Trust Response:

- 1 The presentation on the website together with the answers given in the Q&A session reinforce our opinion that the size of the proposed development and its speculative nature cannot be supported on any grounds. There is nothing to indicate that the developers are sensitive to the site's location in the landscape and its relationship with the unique character of the existing village nor the significant impact that the development will have. The summary provided from unpublished reports, (Transport, Ecology, Socio-Economic and 'ongoing' Landscape and Design) is largely generic and fails to demonstrate any vision for sustainable expansion or any positive and desirable idea of how the new development will engage with the physical form, scale and character of the place and complement it.

Infrastructure:

- 2 Thornhill has an existing serious problem with traffic on the Main Street which remains unresolved despite some calming measures. A housing and industrial development of this size will inevitably make things worse. The documents presented make no reference to this issue nor any mitigation.
- 3 We welcome the fact that JCC is doing well and is looking to expand. It is an important business providing employment and the site has been used for agricultural engineering for decades adding economic vibrancy and character to the village. We would like to understand why JCC need to move to expand, as the size of the new building quoted in the original information provided appears to be smaller than their existing working shed.

- 4 The Burnside site is referred to in the Local Development Plan for housing (5 houses) and industrial use. The reason for rejecting housing on the JCC site is not convincing. Where there is a shortage of houses, particularly houses suited to people trying to find a first home or others interested in different forms of tenure, and as it is possible with imagination to create dwellings in the most restricted or unpromising of places, it is surely a mistake to rule out houses simply because of the shape of the site. Contamination of the ground is also mentioned, but sites can be de-contaminated. It is also highlighted in the LDP that the old Tannery Manager's House should be renovated. The house is on the Building at Risk Register and any approval of development for this site, or linked as described with development elsewhere, should be conditional on every effort being made beforehand to rescue it. Aside from the historic value of the building, the careful re-use of redundant buildings supports sustainability.
- 5 If there is a wish for some community use of this site then there will need to be proper community consultation and a thorough study of the options. Public space may have real benefit to the village if it is created through consideration of all aspects of the site and the identified needs and uses. The plans put forward are unpromising, and a variation in surface treatment at a traffic junction does not seem likely to bring about a 'Village Square' of significant value to the community. The proposal makes no sense in the structure of the village and its road system and there are various sites in the village with much greater potential.
- 6 While the Burnside works site and its activity is important for the village, we do not think that the relocation of JCC is a reasonable justification for a housing development on prime agricultural land outside of the scope of the Local Development Plan, as business expansion would seem to be a commercial decision for the company concerned.

Housing provision:

- 7 The community does not believe there is a requirement for the number of houses indicated. There are several sites within the village envelope which are more natural candidates for housing development. There are also small plots and infill sites. The local plan does not indicate the need for such development.
- 8 The number of new houses proposed is itself a significant obstacle to physical integration with the village (ref 1 above) as it presents a large zone of uniform new

development, lacking in the variety of uses, form, scale and character that has grown over time.

- 9 The proposal includes affordable housing, although neither the distribution nor the number of units are specifically identified. However, the plot sizes and outline plan indicate that the smaller units are in the wet south-east corner of the site, and separated from the rest of the houses.
- 10 The design of the housing development with a single entrance off a main route (e.g. A873) is a suburban satellite pattern of development totally unrelated to the historic planned village and difficult to link with, other than by vehicle transport. In the Thornhill situation this is particularly unsatisfactory as the A873 presents a barrier to any development to the north. The ease and experience of pedestrian and cycle movement should be at the heart of any masterplan and brings a comfortable limit to the growth of settlements.

Joyce Firth, Chair, Thornhill Community Trust

November 3rd 2020