



Mr Tony Lowe
Planning Department
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

Dear Sir

Ref 18/04528/OUT Development plans adjacent to Alnmouth Station, Northumberland

The Alnmouth Rail Users Group (ARUG) note the proposed housing development in Hipsburn village and welcome the inclusion of additional parking for Alnmouth station. However, ARUG observe that the permission is sought for building on land that Northumberland County Councillors told a meeting of ARUG members on Thursday 15th November 2018, 8 pm at St James' Church Hall in Alnwick, could not be used for additional parking due to planning restrictions.

As Northumberland County Council (NCC) officials are aware, Alnmouth railway station is a key contributor the local economy, allowing effective travel to work outside the county, including Tyneside and Edinburgh. Passenger numbers have roughly doubled in the past 10 years, and are around 3.7 times the number when ARUG was established to improve the service.

When rail services to Alnmouth were threatened with cuts in 2001/02, ARUG identified that Alnmouth had the highest working age population within a commutable distance of the three major railheads in Northumberland. That analysis was utilised by rail companies and resulted in an increase in train services and train usage, causing a parking issue in Hipsburn.

ARUG recognise that the provision of additional parking will benefit rail users as well as those living closest to the station. We presume the parking will be free (as the capital costs will borne by the developer). ARUG worked closely with Northumberland County Council and we are grateful for the phased improvements and expansion of car parking at the station. Statistics show that each improvement in car-parking was followed by an increase in passenger numbers at the station, which was also observed at Morpeth: making rail transport a viable option by providing parking increases train use. ARUG strongly believes that the additional parking will be used, and that within a few years further parking will be necessary. Alnmouth station has played a major part in the economic development of Alnwick and surrounding areas and is expected to continue to do so, hence it is important that the station facilities are not restricted.

In our discussions with NCC and other land owners around the station, ARUG has continually been told how limited the options are. We therefore believe that the proposed housing development will prohibit the effective use of land on the eastern side of the station for parking in the future. This would appear to be a very short-term solution to a problem that will prevent expansion of car parking at Alnmouth station and inhibit the sustainable economic development of the area served by the station.

Therefore, whilst ARUG strongly supports the provision of additional parking for Alnmouth Station, we urge Northumberland County Council to consider the future sustainability of parking at the station, especially in consideration of the planning permissions recently granted for new houses in the station



catchment area. As discussed with council officials on 15th November, we believe that the field to the east of the station offers potential for phased expansion of the existing carpark in a sustainable manner without having a negative visual impact on the local environment.

ARUG therefore respectfully suggest that as the landowner has now shown a willingness to release this land for car parking that the provision of parking at Alnmouth Station be made a Section 106 condition for other developments in the district being proposed by the same landowner. This could be achieved most effectively by an extension of the existing “southbound” car park.

We trust you will find these observations helpful in your consideration of the problems faced by NCC and the residents in Hipsburn in the context of the sustainable development of the district.

Yours faithfully

Secretary
Alnmouth Rail Users Group