

Mr Ben Bolgar  
Senior Director  
Prince's Foundation.

9<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

Dear Sir

**Re: Dissington Estate- Enquiry by Design: 11 – 26 September 2016.**

A number of residents and members of various community interest groups in Ponteland have received invitations to the above-mentioned event.

Following this invitation, a number of groups that represent Ponteland residents, in one form or another, have met. Groups represented at the meeting are:

Ponteland Town Council  
Ponteland County Councillor  
Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (working on behalf of Ponteland Town Council)  
Ponteland Civic Society  
Ponteland Green Belt Group  
Ponteland Community Partnership

Following discussion, this letter has been drafted and, therefore, please accept that it represents the response of the following to the Lugano Dissington Estate Garden Village proposal.

Ponteland Town Council  
Ponteland County Councillor Peter Jackson  
Ponteland Civic Society  
Ponteland Green Belt Group  
Ponteland Community Partnership.

**The Event**

Representatives of the above mentioned groups will not be attending the workshops.

We cannot support this proposal in any way.

Since May 2012, this community has been subjected to 11 significant 'consultations' involving various developments proposed for our settlement. A further Core Strategy Major Modifications Consultation has been scheduled by Northumberland County Council (NCC) this autumn.

In addition to NCC Core Strategy Consultations we have consulted on -

- A Supplementary Planning Document for Ponteland

- Major Modifications to the Core Strategy
- Ponteland schools; reducing from a 3 tier to a 2 tier system (with the intention of closing a Middle School which has been rated twice by Ofsted as outstanding)
- A 'consultation' on closing dedicated Leisure Centre facilities, replacing them with a shared facility within the new schools complex; this will result in reduced facilities and reduced access for Ponteland residents.
- We have had the Banks Group 'Ponteland Garden Village' proposal.
- We have had the Lugano 'Birney Hill Garden Village' proposal – a similar workshop, held June 2012 and hosted by Kevin Murray Associates on behalf of the Lugano group.

The Lugano 'Birney Hill Garden Village' workshop was attended by over 400 residents and a 116 page report was produced.

NCC Core Strategy consultation statement June 2016 acknowledges that Ponteland residents have contributed significantly to consultation responses (a consistently high proportion, up to 89% of responses are from Ponteland residents across countywide consultations).

Numerous 'drop in' events held in Ponteland have consistently been extremely well attended; it can never be said that Ponteland residents have not engaged enthusiastically and passionately with consultations held to date.

The common theme running through all of these 'consultations' is that the views of Ponteland residents, who have engaged with the process and responded in such significant numbers, have been completely disregarded.

Unfortunately, it is the experience of many of the residents and representative groups in Ponteland that NCC appears to have a pre-determined plan that has the potential to destroy the character of Ponteland. We believe that 'consultations' are undertaken merely as a 'tick box' exercise.

As a result of NCC's scattergun approach to consultation, the residents of Ponteland are suffering from what can only be described as 'consultation fatigue.'

We fear, from past experience, that a 95% opposition will be reported as if it were a 'constructive meeting' and referred to much later as part of a successful 'consultation'; in the end the majority community view will be effectively ignored.

The flawed consultation process Ponteland residents have experienced is an example of a concern that we will bring to the attention of the Planning Inspector at the Core Strategy EiP (currently timetabled for Spring 2017).

## The proposal

This proposal, ostensibly, came about following an approach to NCC by Lugano following a circulation by DCLG seeking expressions of interest for new 'garden villages' of between 1500 to 10,000 homes.

The eligibility criteria set by DCLG includes:

- *Free-standing settlement - The garden village must be a new discrete settlement, and not an extension of an existing town or village.*
- *Public sector and brownfield land - We encourage expressions of interest, which make effective use of previously developed land (brownfield land) and/or public sector land.*
- *Local demand. It is important that new garden villages are built as a response to meeting housing needs locally. We expect expressions of interest to demonstrate how the new settlement is part of a wider strategy to secure the delivery of new homes to meet assessed need.*

This proposed development could never be described as a freestanding settlement –please see the attached map taken from the Lugano website which shows the development proximity to the Ponteland/Darras Hall settlement. Appendix A.

The Dissington development site is on Green Belt land not brownfield land as intended by DCLG.

NCC's proposals countywide are not supported by an Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) and are unsound.

NCC suggests there is an objectively assessed need countywide for 'at least' 24,320 dwellings in the plan period.

Based on the 2014 ONS figures the estimated DCLG starting point for Northumberland is 11367. NCC's surplus over the DCLG starting point equates to **+114%**.

(NCC preferred option  $24320 - 11367 = 12953 = 12953 / 11367 =$  addition of 114%)

Analysis of Planning Inspectorate statistics demonstrate the average approved plan at EIP since 2012 is between **19%** (2011-2016 analysis) and **24%** (2011-2015 analysis) over the DCLG starting point.

This **114%** addition to 11367 DCLG starting point as suggested by NCC is simply not justifiable. This proposal could therefore not become part of any wider NCC strategy to meet objectively assessed need.

This proposal therefore fails to meet the criteria set by DCLG.

We are aware that NCC has stated that, in the event that the project is not selected by Government as one of the 12 garden village schemes, NCC would still support the delivery of this development.

This latest 'Garden Village' proposal is in addition to a significant amount of land in Ponteland already planned by NCC for removal from the Green Belt. This is strongly opposed by the community. We attach a visual representation of the amount of proposed Green Belt release in Appendix B.

### **Other considerations**

The lack of a correspondence address and the contact email belonging to "localdialogue.com," allied to the lack of explanation concerning "Enquiry by Design" made some believe that this was some form of scam. (We understand you have been made aware of a scam internet address which was found when searching the phrase "Enquiry by Design")

We have (safely) viewed the Prince's Foundation web site and in particular the 'An Enquiry by Design - For Neighbourhood Planning' tab.

We note the section "*what we'll expect from the community*" which then goes on to state

- We will expect you to act as the client

Given our unsatisfactory consultation experiences with NCC we are surprised to learn that The Prince's Foundation has been commissioned by the proposed developer, Lugano, and that the facilitator is from Local Dialogue, a company that specialises in Political and Stakeholder engagement.

By opting not to attend this event, we intend no disrespect to the well-intentioned objectives of the Prince's Foundation when accepting this project.

To cooperate with this workshop, we risk providing Lugano and NCC with evidence of community support, satisfying a DCLG criterion i.e.

*They should also set how the local community is being, or will be, engaged at an*

*early stage, and strategies for community involvement to help ensure local support.*

Not to consult could be interpreted as the community were apathetic to the development; please be in no doubt that the latter is simply not the case.

At the risk of repetition, the Ponteland residents have consistently been assessed as the major respondents to any core strategy consultation. We fill any 'drop in' venue (The SPD 'drop in' was attended by over 730 residents before NCC had to start turning away attendees)

For the sake of brevity, this letter can only succinctly touch on the major issues our community have with NCC 'consultations'.

Given our experience and, as representatives of a significant number of residents, we cannot, regretfully, allow ourselves to once again be subjected to a futile consultation exercise.

Yours Sincerely

Ponteland Town Council  
Ponteland County Councillor Peter Jackson  
Ponteland Civic Society  
Ponteland Green Belt Group  
Ponteland Community Partnership

cc: Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP  
Rt Hon Guy Opperman MP  
Mr Scott Munro Lugano Property group  
Mr Grant Davey Northumbria County Council  
Mr Mark Ketley Northumbria County Council

# Appendix A



**NORTHUMBERLANDIA**  
**19 HECTARES**

**VATICAN CITY**  
**44 HECTARES**

**DISNEYLAND PARK PARIS**  
**57 HECTARES**

**DISNEY'S EPCOT PARK FLORIDA**  
**121 HECTARES**

**NCC PROPOSED PONTELAND  
GREENBELT DELETION**  
**183 HECTARES**  
**(262 HECTARES INCLUDING  
GARDEN VILLAGE PROPOSAL)**