

# **The Sedgefield Plan**

*Shaping the future of our area*

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Sedgefield – a community under siege**

***The team behind the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for Sedgefield responds to recent statements (and resulting media coverage) of developer ESRG's proposals for building housing in the town.***

Sedgefield is a small town with a village at its heart, that makes it an attractive place to live and raise a family. This fact is not lost on landowners and potential developers who have been encouraged by the government's drive to build houses and see Sedgefield as a good location for their aspirations to mature.

The community feels threatened and has commissioned 'The Sedgefield Plan' that will set out policies which, in conjunction with Durham County Council's 'Local Plan', will ensure the development and growth of the community until 2030 does not destroy the character and cohesiveness that has created its attractiveness.

Work on The Sedgefield Plan (TSP) is well underway. A steering group, chaired by local resident David Bowles, has been working hard since autumn 2013, gathering evidence and opinion from the community and developing a framework for the plan and the policies that will be at the heart of it. The steering group's objective is for TSP to become a statutory planning document by the end of 2014.

The depth and scope of the research that underpins the plan's policies and other content is extensive. 2,500 households have been surveyed to establish a baseline on which to build policies. 24% of households responded and 90% indicated that they want to see fewer than 300 additional homes built in Sedgefield over the next 20 years.

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An additional recent survey has gauged the community's opinion about eight specific sites within the parish boundary where developers have expressed an interest, that if taken forward could result in the building of over 3,000 new homes. This would more than double the size of Sedgefield. In responses to this latest survey (which was delivered to all homes in the town), residents made it clear that brownfield sites should be developed before greenfield.

ESRG, a developer supported by Gradon Architecture of Ryton on Tyne, has aspirations to build over 400 houses on greenfield agricultural land in the short to medium term, with a longer term ambition to increase that number to over 2,000 houses on green spaces. A recent ESRG/Gradon leaflet and consultation event speaks of "Advantage Sedgefield", and their follow up press release states that their plans have wide support in the community. The Sedgefield Plan steering group refutes that claim.

David Bowles states:

"Nothing could be further from the truth. In our site preferences survey, over 50% of the 350 respondents (more than double the number that ESRG/Gradon surveyed) rated the ESRG site on Beacon Lane as their least favoured, many offering additional opinions that this is agricultural land that is prone to seasonal flooding.

"If ESRG and its architects want to quote accurate statistics that are not designed to mislead, then they should carry out in depth research and not quote unsubstantiated statistics from the comments of the relatively small number of people who attended their consultation event, which was held outside the town (at the racecourse) and therefore not easy to access for all residents.

"I have a copy of their consultation feedback form, which does not even specifically ask whether people support their proposals. The positive figures that they have quoted do not reflect the community views expressed through our two much larger surveys that were proactively sent to all households and which asked specific questions about preferences about the scale and location of developments in Sedgefield. We believe that ESRG, Gradon and their PR team have grossly misrepresented the views of people in Sedgefield.

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“Localism is about community engagement and The Sedgefield Plan has, and will continue, to engage with residents and businesses on a regular, transparent and thorough basis. Sedgefield is in fact pro-development. The community accepts the need for development and growth but only at a rate that is reasonable given the current size of the town, and in locations that allow it to be properly integrated into the wider infrastructure, without damaging the fundamental character of Sedgefield.”

For more information about The Sedgefield Plan visit [www.thesedgefieldplan.co.uk](http://www.thesedgefieldplan.co.uk), email [info@thesedgefieldplan.co.uk](mailto:info@thesedgefieldplan.co.uk) or follow @SedgefieldPlan on Twitter.