

Vision of 2,000 homes 'would be outrageous'

By Joe Willis

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A VISION of building 2,000 homes on the edge of a small North-East town has been described as outrageous.

Residents of Sedgfield, County Durham, say the proposals would double the size of the town if implemented.

Sedgfield Beacon Lane and Wider Sedgfield Vision has been drawn up by Gradon Architecture, based in Ryton, near Newcastle, on behalf of an unnamed property developer.

The proposals include detailed plans for 220 homes on a site, off Beacon Lane.

The architects claim this scheme is more suitable than the site already proposed in the County Durham draft local plan, off Eden Drive.

However, the vision also includes wider proposals for about 2,000 homes, plus new industrial units, shops, schools and leisure facilities on land to the east of the town.

The plan recommends that

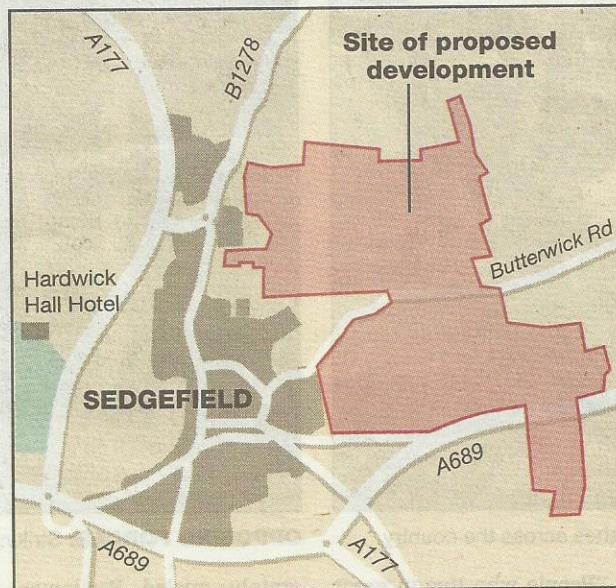
Sedgfield is reclassified as the 13th main town in County Durham, rather than of one 23 smaller towns and villages.

David Bowles, chairman of the Sedgfield Plan steering group, which is drawing up a neighbourhood plan for the town, said the vision had caused alarm among residents of the town.

"It would, in effect, double the size of the community and people are, not surprisingly, quite unhappy about that," he said. "It's outrageous and would completely and utterly alter a community that we came here to live in - it's too much, too fast and being done without proper consultation."

Sedgfield MP Phil Wilson has also raised concerns about the proposals, saying he did not want to see the town lose its character.

"There needs to be sustain-



able development in Sedgfield - I don't think anyone disagrees with that.

"But it has to be done sensitively and I don't think these

plans have been prepared in a sensitive manner."

Durham County Council is preparing a local plan to help guide development in the

county until 2030. Stuart Timmiss, Durham County Council's head of planning and assets, said the needs of Sedgfield were being considered as part of the County Durham Plan.

"As a result, the council has identified an alternative site for housing on land south of Eden Drive. However, the proposal for 2,000 homes is significantly larger than any development we would consider appropriate given the scale and function of the village.

"The matter will be looked at when the County Durham Plan is considered at examination in public in July, whereby an independent inspector will be asked to consider all alternative proposals."

A spokesman for Gradon Architecture said the proposals were in their infancy and neither it nor its client, understood to be a North-East property developer, could comment at this stage.