

NEWTON ON THE MOOR & SWARLAND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP ('The Steering Group')

MEMORANDUM RE: **PERCY WOOD COUNTRY RETREAT** ('Percy Wood')

DATE:

1. The Steering Group have, since May 2023, been in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for Newton on the Moor & Swarland Parish, which is the designated Neighbourhood Area.
2. Part of the work undertaken has been to establish whether there are any open spaces or views that the residents of the parish consider to be important and, if so, whether they fulfil the criteria to be designated as Local Green Spaces, Protected Open Spaces or Key Views.
3. The conclusion of the Steering Group is that two parcels of land comprising of the golf course, separated by a track owned by Forestry England should be designated as Local Green Space/Protected Open Space in order to protect the area as is it valued by the residents of Swarland and they wish to ensure that it is not developed and that the wildlife, flora and fauna are protected.
4. The Steering Group has also ascertained from public facing meetings with the residents of Swarland and the parish generally, that the views from Springwood, Coast View and also from the forestry track across the golf course and toward Percy Wood are important to them. Consequently, the recent felling of beech trees at Percy Wood has caused great upset to people in Swarland.
5. Percy Wood is located on high ground and is away from Swarland village but what happens there in terms of noise, drainage and traffic impacts on life in the village. As a result of this, it is of great concern to the village that the site has grown so large that there are now more units there than there are houses in the village, with more units being proposed to bring the total up to 500.
6. Liz Simpson, who is a member of the Steering Group, has made an approach to Mick Smailes, the site manager at Percy Wood to see whether they would have any objection to the proposal for the golf course or at least that part of it adjacent to Swarland Village to be designated Local Green Space/Protected Open Space. She has also discussed with him the concerns raised about the size of Percy Wood and the tree felling. Mick Smailes has told Liz Simpson that Harrison Leisure: do not wish to develop the golf course and he thinks would have no objection to the designation as Local Green Space or Protected Open Space; do wish to increase the number of units at Percy Wood to 500 but that there will then be no further expansion; once there are 500 units, then the bar/restaurant in the building at Percy Wood reception will be made in accordance with the planning consent already granted (and the Bari Bar will be closed once that work is finished so that Percy Wood will then be contained on the main site); that the intention is for Percy Wood to be screened by planting from the village; that it is hoped that Percy Wood will change its customer experience by offering gravelled path walks (nature trails) and bike rides on some of the land that comprises the golf course; that there will be the opportunity for dark sky experiences and that as a consequence of the foregoing and generally, that there will be a better relationship formed by Percy Wood with the village.
7. Generally, Mick Smailes agreed with Liz that a joint approach needs to be made to Northumbria Water to see what can be done with regard to the drainage issue caused by the discharges from Percy Wood. Both the Steering Group and Harrison Leisure would like to see a larger main drain in the village.
8. This memorandum has been prepared by the Steering Group so that Mick Smailes can take it to Harrison Leisure for their confirmation/agreement of all that he has said to Liz Simpson.

¹ *The original of this memo was created on 22 April 2024*