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### Thorp Arch Neighbourhood Plan: Pre-Submission Consultation Draft Summary

Dear Planning Services

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Thorp Arch Neighbourhood Plan. I write in the capacity of local representative of the National Farmers' Union in the North East with particular interest in planning and economic development in rural areas. I have highlighted a few areas for your consideration.

#### *Public/Permissive Rights of Way*

Where rights of way are created, diverted and/or improved to allow for development, affecting agricultural land, a net loss of a route will not be acceptable, in any circumstances. We would expect that in the event of alterations to rights of way that landowners are thoroughly consulted at an early stage.

#### *Green Infrastructure*

The involvement of green infrastructure plays a key role in flood management and reducing risk both in rural and urban areas. Carefully planned schemes should be incorporated into developments along the length of watercourses consulting with landowners throughout all stages of the project to maximise benefits.

#### *Rural Development/Business*

We would hope that the increase in agri-businesses will continue to be supported by the authority such as diversification on existing farms which strengthen the existing business. Whilst development in rural areas should be considered carefully, applications associated with existing developments should be looked upon favourably when strengthening the business.

Again, Public Rights of Way and the permissive access are a useful resource, but should not be developed to the detriment of landowners – consultation at an early stage is expected.

We note the reference to '*the productive importance of agricultural land*'. I would hope this is of paramount importance when assessing the feasibility of any development, either housing or greenspace. The preservation of rural land is vital in ensuring the sustainability of the rural economy and therefore the economy of the area as a whole.

