
EXAMINATION OF THE BASSETLAW LOCAL PLAN 2020 – 2038

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF HEYFORD DEVELOPMENTS

Matter 2 – Vision & Objectives, Spatial Strategy & Location of New Development, and the Site Selection Process (Policies ST1 and 2)

PREAMBLE

This Matter Statement is made by Barton Willmore, now Stantec, on behalf of our Client, Heyford Developments, in advance of the Examination in Public of the Bassetlaw Local Plan 2020-2038. We are responding in respect of our Client’s land interests at Park Farm, Blyth (‘the Site’), which is being promoted for the provision of approximately 54 dwellings.

We have engaged with the Bassetlaw Local Plan process on behalf of our Client throughout its formulation, including submitting representations to the following consultations:

- Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan (Regulation 18) Version – February 2020
- Bassetlaw Local Plan (Publication Version – Regulation 19): September – October 2021
- Bassetlaw Local Plan (Publication Version Addendum– Regulation 19): January – February 2022
- Bassetlaw Local Plan (Publication Version Second Addendum– Regulation 19): May – June 2022

Reference is duly made to these representations within this Statement to avoid unnecessary duplication of our Client’s position. However, it is requested that the Inspectors has regard to these submissions as written, particularly the response provided to the Bassetlaw Local Plan (Publication Version Second Addendum– Regulation 19): May – June 2022.

Nonetheless, in summary, our Client objects to both Policies ST1 and ST2 and considers that the following modifications are required:

Suggested changes to Policy ST1:

- 1) The difference between the Plan’s total requirement (10,476) and the cumulative total of the draft allocations (12,551) should be explained. Clarification is required as to what level of growth will be delivered for each of the Rural Settlements (and whether Neighbourhood Plan allocations have been double counted) and what the contribution is to the overall housing requirement.
- 2) The growth targets for specific settlements should be updated to contain mechanisms for guarding against the non-delivery of housing through Neighbourhood Plans (see Policy ST2).
- 3) In light of the matters raised in relation to Policy ST1, and issues around supply, trajectory and deliverability, further growth should be directed to the sustainable settlement of Blyth.

Suggested changes to Policy ST2:

- 1) The Policy should set out clearly what the breakdown is in terms of commitments (including reductions for lapse rates) and new housing, with a particular focus on clarifying whether Neighbourhood Plan allocations have been double counted in the commitments. It should also address the imbalance between the significantly higher quantum of development that

- the Small Rural Settlements are set to accommodate compared to the Large Rural Settlements. This can be rebalanced if there is a shortfall due to double counting.
- 2) The draft Plan should revisit the 20% growth requirement/cap applied to Large Rural Settlements and should account for lapse rates. Additional growth should be directed to more sustainable settlements such as Blyth. This should consider the relationship between employment and housing growth as noted in our response to Policy ST1.
 - 3) The policy should remove reference to the weight to be afforded to local community support in determining applications as this could undermine the assessment of an application on its merits. This should be replaced with a more appropriate set of criteria (see also point 4 below).
 - 4) The policy should incorporate an ongoing monitoring of delivery and supply within the Rural Settlements, with a policy basis to support additional supply in the event Neighbourhood Plan allocations and other commitments are not being delivered.

RESPONSE TO INSPECTORS' QUESTIONS

Issue 2 – Are the provisions of the plan in relation to the Spatial Strategy & Location of New Development justified and consistent with national policy? This matter focusses on the broad spatial distribution of new development and on the process by which proposed development sites have been selected for inclusion in the plan (Policies ST1 and ST2). The merits of individual site allocations are considered under Matters 3 and 6)

2.1 *Is the proposed spatial strategy and the distribution of development (as set out in policies ST1 and ST2) supported by robust and up-to-date evidence and otherwise soundly based? In particular:*

- a) Does it reflect the vision and objectives of the plan?*
 - b) To what degree is the spatial framework in Policy ST2 based on the settlement hierarchy in Policy ST1? Is the focus on strategic allocations in the larger urban settlements justified and soundly based?*
 - c) Would the pattern of development proposed meet the needs of larger settlements in the district?*
1. As set out within our previous representations, we object to the proposed spatial strategy and the distribution of development (as set out in policies ST1 and ST2) in that more growth should be directed to the Large Rural Settlements, particularly Blyth. This concern is even more relevant following the withdrawal of the previously proposed new Garden Village and how growth has subsequently been re-distributed following this change in approach. This is expanded upon below in response to Question 2.4.
 2. With regard to Part a) raised by the Inspectors and the Vision and objectives of the Plan, Paragraph 4.9 of the Local Plan presents the following vision for the rural area:

“In the rural area, the outcomes of community-led planning will be evident. Residential development within the Large Rural Settlements of Blyth, Carlton in Lindrick, Langold, Misterton and Tuxford will have been delivered to meet

strategic and local needs. Necessary physical, community, green and digital infrastructure needed to support this growth will have been delivered."

3. The spatial strategy and the distribution of development set out within Policies ST1 and ST2 do not deliver this Vision, particularly in respect of meeting 'strategic' needs given the deliberate restricting of growth imposed by Policy ST2, but also it is considered that local needs are also not met within Blyth (see responses to Question 2.2 and 2.4).
4. Similarly, Strategic Objectives 1 and 2 seek to locate development in sustainable locations that support a sustainable pattern of growth, as well as providing a choice of land to ensure that housing needs and aspirations of all residents are met in sustainable locations within and on the edge of settlements. Again, arbitrarily restricting growth within Large Rural Settlements does not support this objective.
5. Providing limited new growth at Blyth accordingly fails to deliver upon the identified Vision and meet these Objectives.
6. With regard to Part b) raised by the Inspectors, it is considered that the spatial framework presented in Policy ST2 does not reflect the settlement hierarchy presented in Policy ST1. As set out within our previous representation, growth in Rural Settlements in Policy ST2 is largely dependent on commitments, but as above, the draft Local Plan is unclear as to what will be delivered. There is an apparent inconsistency between Figure 8 (suggesting total growth of 1,535 dwellings in Large Rural Settlements) and the commitments in the Land Availability Assessment (suggesting 1,296 dwellings, when taking into account the proposed allocation in Tuxford). It appears that the Neighbourhood Plan allocations have been double counted. We query whether the same has been done for Small Rural Settlements. This needs to be addressed, otherwise there is a potential shortfall, which is not clear as the draft Plan is unclear as to what will be delivered.
7. In respect of evidence, the findings of the Bassetlaw Rural Settlement Study Update and Spatial Strategy Background Paper (Update November 2020) clearly set out the distinction between Small and Large Rural Settlements and their comparative capacity for growth. However, the housing distribution within Policy ST1 affords Small Rural Settlements collectively 291 dwellings more than Large Rural Settlements. The proposed distribution of growth accordingly does not reflect the evidence.
8. Similarly, the Local Plan identifies Blyth as delivering 111 dwellings across the Plan Period, yet no new sites are allocated in order to achieve this. 60 dwellings currently without planning permission are anticipated to be delivered through the Neighbourhood Plan, 53 of which are within one allocation. Alongside commitments¹ totalling 20, this leaves a shortfall of 31 dwellings. Given the restrictive provisions of Part 3 of Policy ST2 it is considered this shortfall is unlikely to come forward without additional allocations. In response to the Inspectors' Part c), it is clear that

¹ in Appendix 3 of [SUB-010]

the needs of Larger Rural Settlements such as Blyth would not be met. This is in terms of the overall number directed towards it, given the arbitrary growth figure which is not based on an assessment of sustainability, existing services, constraints etc and therefore capacity; but even based on the figures proposed in the Plan, insufficient sites are identified to meet the need in full. This is despite other available sites such as our Client's: the January 2022 Land Availability Assessment (LAA) concluding that our site (reference LAA435) is "suitable" for development and has "no significant constraints identified at this stage", yet it is not allocated for development.

9. As is set out later within this Statement, we consider that the pattern of development proposed accordingly does not meet the needs of larger settlements in the district, particularly Blyth, and does not align with the relevant evidence.

2.2 *What is the evidential basis for the settlement hierarchy in policy ST2? Does this accurately reflect the pattern of settlements across the district? Is this up-to-date? How does this inform the development strategy? What other factors influenced the strategy, such as physical and environmental constraints?*

10. Whilst our client supports splitting the settlements and the methodology behind it, the arbitrary blanket growth approach for both Large (20%) and Small (5%) Rural Settlements is not supported. This approach does not allow for any distinction to be made between the level of services, facilities, and amenities at each of the settlements, and instead only recognises the existing number of dwellings at each settlement.
11. In this regard, the Council itself recognises at paragraph 5.2.3 of the draft Local Plan that "*...the rural area has seen a disproportionate level of residential development, particularly over the period 2015-2018, which saw a high level of planning permissions granted.*"
12. The imposition of a growth requirement based upon the number of dwellings as of 2020 accordingly only serves to compound and build upon this issue. Instead, growth ought to be apportioned to each of the Large and Small Rural Settlements based upon the relative sustainability and capacity of each individual settlement, noting that, even within the 'Large Rural Settlement' categorisation, some settlements are more sustainable than others.
13. As such, further growth should be directed to sustainable settlements, such as Blyth², which has a higher capacity for growth than the arbitrary 20% cap allows. The Policy in its current form raises concerns over its consistency with the NPPF's objective to significantly boost the supply of homes (paragraph 60).

² Referred to in [SUB-010] as one of settlements which "*most sustainable due to them having the largest populations, a range of employment, shops and services and having more frequent and commercially viable public transport services to nearby larger towns and cities. All also act as service centres for the surrounding rural area*" (paragraph 5.1.54)

2.3 *What other spatial strategies and distributions of growth were considered during plan preparation, and why were they discounted? Where is the evidence for this? Were alternative approaches tested in the Sustainability Appraisal work?*

14. No response is provided in respect of this question as it is considered most appropriate for the Council to provide a response to this matter.

2.4 *Do policies ST1 and ST2 allow sufficient development in large rural settlements, small rural settlements and other villages to comply with para 79 of the Framework? How were the proportions of development proposed for each settlement arrived at?*

15. We have made comments elsewhere within this Statement regarding the appropriateness of a 20% cap the Large Rural Settlements. It is not an appropriate way of determining capacity for growth as it can just amplify the effects of previously unplanned growth which was not supported by infrastructure. Notwithstanding these concerns it is questionable whether the proportions of development proposed for each settlement actually reflect this cap.

16. Taking Blyth as an example, the Local Plan identifies that 111 dwellings will be delivered during the Plan Period through Policy ST2. Given this is figure is purportedly 20% of the total housing stock, this suggests that the total number of dwellings in Blyth in 2020 was 555. Given the 2021 Census results have not been published yet, the Council should clarify how it has ascertained the baseline number of dwellings for Blyth and what this figure is for the avoidance of doubt.

17. Lastly, it considered that Policy ST2 does not sufficiently "...identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services", as required by Paragraph 79 of the NPPF. In respect of Blyth, Policy ST2 does not specifically allocate any sites to deliver growth, despite there being a vacuum between the committed dwellings and the 111-dwelling minimum requirement identified by Policy ST2, as set out within our response to Question 2.1.

2.5 *Are the proposed settlement development boundaries appropriately drawn? What factors were taken into account in designating these? Is the approach taken in relation to settlement boundaries in Small Rural Settlements justified and consistent with national policy?*

18. Given the lack of allocations in Blyth and the restrictive nature of ST2, we consider the settlement boundary should be extended to include our site, so that an application can be determined on its merits, which could assist in meeting local housing needs.

2.6 *Have the sites allocated for development in the plan been appraised and selected in comparison with possible alternatives using a robust and objective process?*

19. As set out above, the January 2022 Land Availability Assessment (LAA) concludes that our Client's site (reference LAA435) is "suitable" for development and has "no significant constraints identified at this stage". Whilst it is accepted that not all suitable sites should necessarily be allocated for development, it is nonetheless expected that clear reasons should be provided for the non-designation of sites. The Council has not done this and therefore the process has not been objective. This is even more important given insufficient sites have been identified.

2.7 *Are the plans assumptions in relation to the amounts and timing of development to be delivered through neighbourhood plans and the Worksop Central Development Plan soundly based?*

20. As we set out in our previous responses to the draft Plan, the growth identified in Policy ST1 (and ST2) is in part reliant on the Neighbourhood Plans, especially in respect of the Villages. Whilst we generally support the locally-led approach which underpins the neighbourhood plan process, the recently adopted Blyth Neighbourhood Plan is reliant on one site to deliver the majority of its housing requirement, despite our view that it is of questionable deliverability / developability. This therefore presents a risk to the Council meeting its housing growth requirements. The Plan is therefore too optimistic and contains insufficient mechanisms to protect against under-delivery (in combination with a very restrictive policy ST2).

2.8 *Are policies ST1 and ST2 otherwise justified and consistent with national policy? Are there any omissions in the policies and are they sufficiently flexible?*

21. As set out above, the percentage growth requirements for Large and Small Rural Settlements are considered to be arbitrary and not sufficiently flexible. Parts 2 and 3 of Policy ST2 seeks to restrict growth to these arbitrary requirements.

2.9 *Do the vision and objectives of the plan adequately address matters of climate change and air quality?*

22. No response is provided in respect of this question as it is considered most appropriate for the Council to provide a response to this matter.

2.10 *Are the Council's proposed modifications to the policies necessary for soundness?*

23. We do not consider the modifications adequately address the issues raised, but we appreciate these changes would require Main Modifications in any case.