

## Bassetlaw Local Plan Examination

### Matter 3 – Employment Land

#### **3.3b: Apleyhead, is it based on up-to-date evidence?**

#### **3.4b: Is there sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the site can be implemented and that all necessary infrastructure and mitigation measures required to support it are achievable and can be delivered**

#### **3.4c: What assumptions have been made in relation to the timescale for delivery and are these justified?**

1. There are critically important considerations of sufficiency of evidence, demonstration of implementation, though perhaps ‘delivery’ is more relevant expression; and that all necessary infrastructure and mitigation measures required to support it are achievable and can be delivered.
2. The Council explains at BDC-02 paras 3.33-3.40 the current evidence and process to consider and identify *further* evidence, including off-site highways works. This appears to focus on mitigation measures (para 3.34) followed by a more strategic improvement plan for the A57 corridor that is not in place for the purpose of this EIP.
3. On the basis that the Local Plan as submitted is ‘sound’, then the evidence to support it should be manifest, not speculated through further work that was not made clear during pre-submission consultation. Consideration needs to be given to the plan at the point of adoption, not at a future review stage.
4. The timing of delivery of Apleyhead is explored at BDC-02 para 3.42. Progress is ‘market’ and ‘interest’ led. Design and end user requirements are important factors and therefore it is far from clear that a sufficiency of evidence exists to support delivery of the necessary infrastructure, let alone whether the measures and instruments are there to deliver this. The sufficiency of evidence and the test of soundness are linked. The points here echo para 8 of the letter dated 10 January 2020 from the Inspectors considering the Uttlesford Local Plan (copy appended) where concerns are raised:
  - about the lack of evidence to enable parts of the plan to be sound
  - that much of the delivery detail is anticipated following the adoption of the plan
  - that it is ‘this’ examination which must determine whether the proposals are properly justified and realistically developable
5. Of course, there are differences of policy outcome between Bassetlaw and Uttlesford. However, the above three points apply to the Bassetlaw Local Plan that anticipates much further supportive evidence for a policy review by 2028.

6. Not all of the information is before this examination to determine a sound local plan. This reveals an important point: the evidence base should be attuned to the plan at examination, not the further review and evidence base that may or may not be available by 2028.
7. Within the anticipated delivery framework there are many 'moving parts', not least of which is infrastructure cost, funding and the uncertainty of bid outcomes. What is clear is that:
  - The A57 Strategic Improvement Plan is to be progressed through a separate assessment process (BDC-02 para 3.38)
  - An Improvement Plan is to facilitate bids through various agencies (BDC-02 para 3.40)
  - The A57 Project Group is multi-agency and concerned with the A57 corridor between the A1 and M1 (BDC-02 Appendix 2)
  - Preliminary design is anticipated 2024-2025
  - The Project Objectives include the identification of potential funding gaps
  - The improvement plan will inform the Bassetlaw Local Plan review expected to be in 2028 (BDC-02 Appendix 2)
8. On the face of it, the infrastructure to facilitate Apleyhead is not known, it is not fully costed and the workstreams focus on a Local Plan Review. The Local Plan purports to be sound, yet the evidence to support it is not there *yet*. It follows that a strategic outcome cannot be described as based on *up-to-date* evidence.
9. There remain fundamental questions of delivery and the flexibility to support a sound Local Plan.

### **3.7: Are there any omissions in the policies and are they sufficiently flexible**

10. The A1 Corridor Logistics Assessment as produced by Iceni Projects in August 2021 ( TI-014) and the further addendum (TI-016) produced in April 2022 provide a helpful overview of the logistics market in the Bassetlaw area. The Iceni work is recent and points to omissions both geographic and substantive.
11. TI-014 speaks of the necessity to focus on the role of the A1 corridor from Doncaster to Newark (para 6.1); a larger demand area paralleling the M1 corridor (para 7.1); and, referencing further sites 'most likely' being required in the southern part of the PMA (para 7.2). It presents as somewhat odd that there is a firm focus on the delivery of Apleyhead through a further review of the Local Plan, when there is a complementary opportunity, also on the A57/A1 corridor to the south, that can also provide a logistics function. The inability of the Local Plan to consolidate business growth incorporating logistics space at Markham Moor presents as a curious omission.
12. Whilst it may not be the function of this EiP to consider alternative sites, it can be stated that the ST7 policy framework in relation to logistics is somewhat fixed, focussed, rigid and lacking flexibility. This despite a larger demand area (SUB-010 para 6.1.23)
13. If there is limited guidance on how future proposals for development should be considered then the policy framework as between ST7 and ST11 is deficient in that a decision maker is denied flexibility. ST7 is somewhat specific, whilst ST11 is too general. Modifications necessary for clarity and for the policy to be effective need to be considered.

14. The Iceni work (TI-014) points to the *necessity* of further logistics sites on the A1 south of Worksop. It presents as a critical omission if the existing A1/A57 junction at Markham Moor (a well-configured, well-recognised and well-used junction/stop on the A1) was ignored as a potential opportunity site for a logistics hub integrated with the operational infrastructure that supports drivers and their vehicles.
15. This work seems to skew the Local Plan outcomes away from the Bassetlaw A1 corridor as a whole (Doncaster to Newark), to something that is selective, partial and uncertain. Flexibility is therefore justified on the basis that the policy framework as between ST7/Policy 9/Site SEM001 and ST11 is deficient. If the decision maker is denied clarity or direction or 'steer', then modifications necessary for the policy to be effective ought to be considered.
16. As submitted, the Bassetlaw Local Plan looks to the A57 Project Group to address the supporting infrastructure for Apleyhead. The geography of this is very different to that outlined in TI-014. The Project Group looks, *inter alia*, to the following:
  - To inform the emerging Bassetlaw Local and emerging Rotherham Local Plan
  - An improvement plan for the length of the A57 between Worksop and Rotherham
  - To inform funding bids and mechanisms
17. There are five core observations:
  - The Iceni Report looks to the Bassetlaw A1 corridor, whereas the A57 Project Group looks to the A57 corridor from Worksop to Rotherham
  - Apleyhead is the sole strategic site identified in the Local Plan and whilst there may be confidence of its delivery within the Local Plan period (BDC-02 para 3.41), it does not meet the overall requirements of a 15 year local plan (TI-014 refers to 8 years future supply, based on past take-up; this dropping to 6.4 years without Apleyhead)
  - Where the A57 Project Group is anticipating informing the 2028 Local Plan Review, then the delivery of Apleyhead is likely to be bound-up in matters of funding, bid, engineering, mitigation, phasing and Section 106 issues
  - ST7/Policy 9/Site SEM001 is not resilient enough; the evidence is not yet there to support delivery
  - Even if Apleyhead did come forward within the plan period, one would still need further sites to come forward ; this is the scenario explored by Iceni
18. TI-014 para 3.8 refers to the 2019 Bassetlaw EDNA which indicated no demand for supersheds, yet a demand for a smaller scale sub-hub; district needs met by supply.
19. The Logistics Market in the East Midlands, January 2021, published by Savills, pointed to 10 years of forecast e-commerce growth occurring in the first month of the national lockdown in 2020 (TI-014 para 3.30) and the planning system needing to support continued delivery of space to enable logistics to effectively function as demand for space continues to grow (TI-014 para 3.33).

20. The report went on to argue that “the planning system needs to support the continued delivery of space to enable logistics to effectively function as demand for space continues to grow”. New market deliveries in the A1 property market area average for the last five years is confirmed as 2.4 million square feet per annum (para 4.11) and at paragraph 5.8 it is indicated that there is around eight years worth of future supply based on take up, or 11 years based on historic deliveries.
21. TI-014 talks in terms of limited capacity, lack of supply, rising rents, repressed market activity, very low immediate availability, all suggesting business needs are not being met. Yet, the emerging Local Plan continues to endorse Apleyhead, providing a fraction of the 11 years supply in the overall period of the Local Plan to 2038:

*“Apleyhead junction site accounts for 4.4 million square feet of pipeline or around 1.5 years of historic requirements alone ... the total levels of supply are likely to be inadequate for the future 15 year period of local planning”*

22. It need be emphasised that the Council's own report merely suggests that Apleyhead makes an important contribution.
23. So, with the above in mind, one can identify:
- (i) a **geographic omission** - the exclusion of the southern section of the A1 corridor;
  - (ii) a **substantive omission** in that additional sites are required to address the 15 year plan period
  - (iii) a **lack of policy flexibility** in that no complementary/reserve/opportunity sites are identified.
24. On the basis that ST7/Policy 9/Site SEM001 makes provision for Apleyhead as a strategic logistics development site, delivered taking into account ecological, environmental and heritage matters, then it follows that the assessment of alternatives would take account of similar factors, including the significance and setting of heritage assets (Policy 9 2(d)). This is a matter for mitigation within the ambit of submitted policy.
25. The submitted Local Plan describes the environmental constraints and mitigation at paras 6.3.3 – 6.3.9. Other sites, alternative sites, can be delivered and the impact of them can be addressed through policy
26. As things currently stand, there is no flexibility within the Local Plan should Apleyhead be delayed. For the reasons explained above, there are fundamental matters of delivery, impact, mitigation, and funding that accompany Policy 9. The current EiP does not have the benefit of a complete information. The related policy ST11 looks to allocated land or that in existing use, and so the policy framework lacks the clarity to bring forward complementary or supportive logistics space. Two points can be made here:
- the Council’s consideration of sites lacks an even-handed approach in that ‘constraints’ that can be overcome in relation to Policy 9 are used to ‘mark down’ alternatives
  - the wider assets of the A1 corridor south of Worksop do not feature and there is a curious omission in the Markham Moor junction and associated uses not being regarded as a growth opportunity

27. There appears a belief that the A57/A1 junction is singular. There are two such junctions. In order to explore the opportunity that exists here, one is exposed to Policy ST11. This policy is questionable in that where policy 9 is 'fixed', that is rigidly focussed on Apleyhead, ST11 lacks the flexibility to bring forward logistics space at a well-recognised junction. Because ST11 is concerned with the wide rural area of the District, it lacks the ambit or focus on the A1 corridor and its existing assets.
28. ST11 is somewhat general and narrow in that it concerns the general rural area (what is meant by 'outside existing employment areas', the term 'growth of businesses' is not clear, yet it might allow business opportunity or operational requirement. It is also 'narrow' and therefore lacks flexibility. As drafted, ST11 states:

**POLICY ST11: Rural Economic Growth and Economic Growth outside Employment Areas**

**1. Proposals for the growth of businesses in the rural area and outside established employment sites/allocations will be supported where all of the following are met:**

- a) there is a proven need for the development in terms of a business opportunity or operational requirements;**
- b) in the case of existing sites, the proposed development cannot physically and reasonably be accommodated within the existing curtilage;**
- c) the scale of development is appropriate in the proposed location;**
- d) where appropriate the proposal makes efficient use of previously developed land and re-use of existing buildings;**
- e) the development will have no adverse impact on the character of the location, the surrounding townscape or landscape, the form and character of the settlement or upon biodiversity and heritage assets;**
- f) safe access can be achieved by vehicles, and where appropriate sustainable transport and public transport, and that there will be no unacceptable impact on the safe operation of the highway network; and,**
- g) the development generates no adverse impact on residential amenity in accordance with Policy 48.**

**2. Proposals that support the diversification of the rural economy, including educational facilities to provide training for rural and heritage professions will be supported subject to the provisions of this policy.**

29. There is internal inconsistency revealed by the above policy criteria and the characteristics and sensitivities included in paras 6.3.3 to 6.3.9. Heritage and environmental factors are treated positively in the ambit of ST7/Policy 9, yet ST11 includes a test of *"no adverse impact on the character of the location, the surrounding townscape or landscape, the form and character of the settlement or upon biodiversity and heritage assets"*
30. Supporting text at para 6.5.4 of the Submitted Local Plan explains Policy ST11 in terms of:
- new employment development that needs to be in the rural area
  - operational and locational requirements
  - extension and intensification of established employment sites
  - re-use of appropriate buildings.
31. As between ST7/Policy 9/SEM001 and ST11, there is no flexibility to bring forward a complementary logistics facility at a purpose-built north/southbound junction on the A1 at Markham Moor. Markham Moor creates an "Area of Opportunity" for future logistics growth, and we do not believe that has been explored adequately by the Council.

32. This emphasises the need for policy flexibility and for specific ‘opportunity sites’ to be identified and for ‘windfall’ employment sites to come forward particularly in the short term and particularly within the A1 corridor where demand is greatest.
33. On the basis that Policy ST11 provides a support framework for economic growth outside Employment Areas, then it does not present a necessary flexibility in bringing forward the optimum use of an established location on a strategic transport corridor such as the A1. Despite the work of Iceni, the opportunity to optimise opportunities at a key hub are not evident and facilitated by policy.
34. It is therefore submitted that Policy ST11 is amended:
- It is illogical to have a policy operating on the basis of ‘all criteria’ being met, yet (d) refers to “where appropriate” and (b) refers to “existing sites”
  - The policy needs to be balanced across a number of potential scenarios, not just existing brownfield sites
  - “No adverse impact” (e) is not a good basis for decisions where the essence of planning judgement is balancing policy and material considerations
35. We suggest that the introduction to the policy is amended to: “Proposals for growth of businesses in the rural area and outside established employment sites/allocations will be supported where the **relevant** criteria are met.”
36. Policy could go further in recognising the genuinely unique role of land at the A1 Markham Moor junction in providing opportunities for logistics development. A policy sub-note 3 could be introduced:
- “3. Support will be afforded to employment development at Markham Moor. This is an existing and well-used transport hub on the A1 and the opportunity exists to consolidate the economic and sustainability functions of this important location”**

**The Land and Planning Company  
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