

From: Jennifer Hubbard
Sent: 10 August 2015 17:50
To: LDF
Subject: PLAN Selby: Comments on Summer 2015 Stakeholder Engagement Draft Documents

Please find set out below my observations on the various draft PLAN Selby documents currently the subject of Stakeholder Consultation. They are in no order of importance and are not defined by reference to individual draft documents, as many have relevance to more than one document.

1. Green Belt/Duty to Cooperate/Escrick

The potential for Escrick to accommodate housing growth to contribute to meeting the needs, in part, of York and, in part, of Selby was the subject of high level (i.e. at Chief Executive/Local Member level) correspondence, meetings and discussions during 2014. The potential development site under consideration lies immediately to the north of Escrick, but within the City of York and the Parish of Deighton. Deighton Parish Council positively supports a potential residential allocation in this area.

It is important to recognise that the outer boundary of the York Green Belt immediately to the north of Escrick has never been defined. Whereas to the west and east of Escrick, the outer boundary of the green belt is defined in the adopted Selby District Local Plan, to the north of the village the general extent of the green belt stops at the administrative boundary between the two Council areas – which, coincidentally, happens to be the rear gardens of residential development at the northern edge of the village. Whether the administrative boundary is an appropriate outer boundary for the green belt in this locality has never been considered. There can therefore be no automatic presumption that the land immediately to the north of the built-up area of Escrick is within the green belt. This is fundamental to the extent to which Escrick can – or should – grow without requiring an alteration to adopted green belt boundaries.

It should also be noted that the land concerned was identified as a draft housing allocation in the penultimate version and as safeguarded land in the last version of York's stalled emerging Local Plan. The change from allocation to safeguarded land was the result of the then-Council reviewing (downwards) York's housing requirements. A new administration took control of York in May. The City's housing requirements are currently being reconsidered.

2. Definition of Development Limits

It is accepted that Core Strategy policy requires development limits to be established for main settlements, DSVs and secondary villages.

The current development limits were most recently re-confirmed (and in some minor instances, updated), in the 2005 Selby District Local Plan but the majority of development limits and the entirety of the approach and criteria to be used in their definition, date from the Selby Rural Areas Local Plan Alteration No.1 (Village Envelopes) of 1992! In numerous instances, development limits bisect property curtilages and in some cases run through the middle of buildings – a situation criticised by Appeal Inspectors over the years as irrational. The approach ignores the widely differing characters of – especially – rural settlements in the District; leads to standardisation of layouts and hence the density of development and stifles good/innovative design.

Core Strategy Policy SP4 clearly identifies the scale and type of development appropriate in different settlements within the settlement hierarchy and will be supported in due course by robust development management policies. Together, DC and DM policies reduce the need for tight development limits.

Furthermore, circumstances have changed significantly since development limits were first established, most recently in relation to farmsteads. Core Strategy policy supports the redevelopment of farmsteads in DSVs and secondary villages, and the recent extension of permitted development rights which allow the conversion of farm buildings to dwellings whether within or outside development limits, already provide some flexibility. Government policy also cautions against retaining employment sites if no demand for them exists. It would be entirely wrong to define tight development limits to frustrate these new Government-lead initiatives which are intended to stimulate development and the economy.

In relation to the standardisation of development character and density, it is noted that the SADPD adopts a standard density of dwellings per hectare to establish the yield of dwellings from potential housing sites irrespective of their character and surroundings, and even including the context set by the Council's own policy – for example, identifying a dwelling yield based on 30dph for a deep but essentially linear site which the SADPD itself suggests is appropriate for frontage development only.

By drawing development limits more widely, the character of new development can properly respond to the characteristics of the individual site concerned and provide scope to vary layouts, provide for any identified need (e.g. bungalows) and safeguard trees and other physical and environmental features – that is to say, will permit the high standards of design required by the NPPF.

The case for tight development limits – advocated in the draft document – namely that too widely drawn limits could result in residential development exceeding Core Strategy requirements, is misplaced on two counts. First, the CS housing figures are targets, not a ceiling but, perhaps more importantly, the approach assumes that the development management process cannot adequately protect the environment and character of settlements. That cannot be a correct approach.

Much greater thought/consideration also needs to be given to the definition of development limits at the outer edged of linear villages. If linear development is a readily identifiable character of a settlement, there can be no rationale for limiting further extensions consistent with that character. On what basis can a linear village be acknowledged as having a 'special character' (frequently underpinned by conservation area status), but for further linear development to be considered unacceptable ribbon development?

The point being – one size does not fit all. The Test Valley Borough Council approach to including land/uses within development limits and the Purbeck District Council approach to development limits normally following property boundaries – and in both cases looking principally at what areas and uses define the identity of an individual settlement - should be followed at Selby.

The criteria for defining development limits as set out in draft documents are (much) too tight and will result in insensitive development and loss of settlement character.

3. Preliminary Assessment of Utility Capacity in DSVs

North Duffield: paragraph B14.2 Village Characteristics/Information: Population.

Where does Church Fenton fit in?

4. Designated Service Villages: Growth Options Report

If an Option 1-based approach (proposed dispersal across all DSCs based on current size) had any merit, the District's total housing requirement, including that for the main settlements as well as DSVs, could have been determined at the Core Strategy stage without any need for any further quantitative or qualitative assessments. It is an entirely unsubtle approach which has no regard for settlement character, sustainability, environmental considerations or – in some cases – the need for a settlement to grow to meet specific housing or other identifiable needs.

The 'Cons' of Option 1 (immediately above paragraph 7.3, page 15 of the draft document) neatly sum up the flaws in this Option.

Option 3 is possible, subject to the comments above relating to the green belt surrounding Escrick. Apart from the villages immediately adjacent to Selby, Escrick is *the* most sustainable rural settlement in the District. There has been very little new residential development in the village since the 1960s/70s and the parish Council accepts there is now a need for some further growth. If this is not to occur to the north of village (within York) then the release of green belt land adjacent to Escrick but in Selby, will have to be contemplated.

Option 2 provides the optimum basis for distributing the DSV housing requirement *subject to* a number of important caveats:

- i. The Core Strategy Background Paper: Sustainability Assessment of Rural Settlements 2010 was found at the Core Strategy Examination to be flawed in a number of important respects and, in any event, is now significantly out of date. It should be up-dated (as we understand is being done in conjunction with input from Parish Councils).
- ii. As indicated at paragraph 7.1.3 (Residual Housing Requirements) and Tab 7.1, planning permission has been granted for a large number of new dwellings since April 2014. Significant additional permissions have been granted since the draft document was published – for example at Barlby (c180 dwellings) and Eggborough, and others are in the pipeline. It is important in these circumstances that the distribution of the rural housing requirement should be determined first and these new commitments 'netted off' the resultant requirement for the individual villages to determine what additional allocations – if any – are required (in some cases, planning permissions granted may already exceed the amount of new development identified through the assessment methodology).

If the residual housing requirement is taken as a starting point for distribution, some settlements may potentially be required to accommodate housing numbers greatly in excess of what otherwise would be considered appropriate, undoubtedly giving rise to local/Parish Council objection that the total allocation is disproportionate. Such an outcome would be an unexpected – and undesirable – consequence of recent particular circumstances in which planning applications have been brought forward at a time when the Council cannot identify a 5-year supply of housing land, and would render the assessment process all-but otiose.

- iii. We have an on-going criticism of the approach to accessibility as set out in both the DSV Growth Options and the Framework for Site Selection Reports, including the accessibility criteria at Appendix A of the latter. Categorising rural settlements by reference to existing public transport facilities and access to large centres of employment is a heavy handed, urban approach which is unsuitable to be applied as currently proposed to rural areas of the District – particularly so since the NPPF acknowledges that reliance on the motor vehicle is inevitable in many rural areas.

Numerous studies have identified that a 10 minute bus service is necessary to ensure that people will always – or almost always – choose public transport over private cars. Not even the York – Selby A19 corridor has a 10 minute service and the existing service is threatened at regular intervals. Bus operators can and frequently do change both the frequency and routing of services which are not Council-supported – that is to say, the services are demand-lead. Whilst bus services are one element of the sustainability of a settlement, the weight currently attributed to existing public transport services is disproportionate to the weight attached to other relevant features (both negative and positive). A more detailed, settlement-specific, approach is required which also includes existing or the potential for car sharing/a car club, the existence – or otherwise – of school buses and local taxi services and the availability of public transport services at times suitable for journey to work/journey to school trips. Car sharing in rural settlements is widespread both to the end destination or to the nearest bus route/train station, but much more detailed investigations need to be carried out to enable judgements to be made about the extent to which residents in any settlement can (excluding journey to work) meet most of their daily/weekly needs without the leaving the settlement. This would involve such things as the existence of a Doctor's surgery/whether prescriptions are issued or otherwise delivered to the village; whether any village shop/Post Office also functions as a newsagents, dry cleaners etc and/or whether it offers a cash back facility (to avoid trips to Selby/York to the Bank).

In relation to employment, proximity to employment *centres* should be replaced by proximity to employment *opportunities* as there are numerous employment opportunities within and/or in close proximity to rural settlements, Other than the DSVs at the extreme western edge of Selby, which are reasonably proximate to Leeds, there is little meaningful distinction to be drawn between DSVs within 20-30 minutes isochrones of York, Leeds and principal service centres, within 30-40 minutes or longer isochrones *particularly* since a significant part of the time taken on each of these journeys in the morning/evening peaks is accounted for by queuing entering or leaving the higher order employment centres.

5. Flood Risk

It is suggested that the Stage 1 SFRA is to be 'refreshed', which implies little more than minor updating. If this is correct, it is not a suitable vehicle on which to base long term planning decisions outside Selby town (which has the benefit of a Stage 2 Assessment). The Environment Agency have carried out no modelling of flood risk in the rural areas and rely on (very) historic flood events – certainly many decades before the advent of the Selby Coalfield and related and extensive flood protection and surface water drainage works. There are many instances where detailed topographical surveys clearly demonstrate that current flood maps cannot be correct. Please ask if you require details: I have three current examples in one DSV where the Environment Agency has agreed the flood maps do not correctly represent the position on the ground.

6. The Proposed Framework for Site Selection

We welcome the recognition in the draft document that site selection is an iterative process and that whatever method is used, the outcome (that is, the eventually chosen draft allocations) should be re-tested against the original criteria. This would avoid a situation which has occurred elsewhere where a potential site for a large industrial development, largely surrounded by tree belts, was ruled out at Stage 1 due to its proximity to a bridleway. The site eventually chosen which survived the 'sieving' process was the field next door, which was totally unscreened. Without care, a tick-box approach to a sieving process can lead to ludicrous results.

We are, however, not convinced about the 4 stages identified in the draft documents or the assumed distinction between qualitative and quantitative factors. Sites displaying clear ‘show stopper’ negative factors should clearly be put on a reserve list to be revisited and potential mitigation considered if it becomes clear that sufficient more suitable sites are not available. It seems to us that an element of judgement is involved in many of the factors involved in the draft document, whether described as quantitative factors – e.g. proximity to local services, or qualitative factors – e.g. environmental and social criteria and some factors described as qualitative are capable of technical assessment, not requiring judgement, for example the physical point of access, air quality and contamination.

The flow chart at Fig. 2 of the NPPF assumes quantitative and qualitative issues will be considered at the same time, not sequentially and this is clearly the correct approach.

We cannot comment on the appropriateness of the approach to determining the viability of potential development sites as no detailed information is yet available.

It is essential that Stages 2 and 3 (Fig. 6.1 Critical Flow Chart) are amalgamated. Failure to do this will result in an unbalanced outcome. However, Plan Selby will stand or fall on deliverability and it is not understood why this item is left as a final stage consideration.

The Workshop approach to a “final draft” consideration of the suitability of sites *before* a final choice is made is supported, especially the Sefton approach (pioneered by a Chief Planning Office previously employed by Selby District Council!) which relies heavily on planning judgements to determine whether a site with a number of positive benefits, but which fails on one of what might be described as key criteria, provides the optimum choice.

Jennifer Hubbard BA MRTPI
Town Planning Consultant

Cheryl Atkinson

From: Jennifer Hubbard
Sent: 11 August 2015 12:49
To: LDF
Subject: PLAN Selby - Site Allocations - Designated Service Villages Growth Options Report

Good Morning,

I have just been looking again at the North Duffield content of the above document (Section B14). In my general submissions yesterday, I noted that Church Fenton had crept into the North Duffield Appraisal under 'Population' but I now see that the Landscape Appraisal Findings (Tab. 1) under 'Sensitivity', 'Setting' and 'Physical Impact' refers to Leeds Road, Selby; the A63, the Leeds-Hull Railway and Thorpe Willoughby. Church Fenton creeps in again at the top of page B14.

Such simple errors and obvious lack of checking does raise questions about the accuracy and credibility of all the PLAN Selby draft documents.

I imagine you will require Arup to conduct a thorough check across all the documents before the next versions are published.

Hope this helps.

Regards

Jenny Hubbard
Sent on behalf of Jennifer Hubbard