HEARING STATEMENT

MATTER 3: STRATEGIC APPROACH

ON BEHALF OF THE GASCOINES GROUP (REF: 04430)

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TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)
PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This hearing statement is provided on behalf of our client The Gascoine Group. It is made in respect of 'Matter 3: Strategic Approach'. Responses are provided solely to questions which are directly relevant to our client’s site and previous submissions made on their behalf.

1.2 The Gascoine Group are promoting one site through this Local Plan, this being Land West of Bawtry Hall, Bawtry (site reference: 996).

1.3 Our Client is an important stakeholder in the plan making process and wishes to ensure that the Doncaster Local Plan is prepared in a robust manner that passes the tests of soundness contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (para. 35), namely that the plan is:

- Positively Prepared;
- Justified;
- Effective; and
- Consistent with national policy.

1.4 Our client supports many of the policies within the Local Plan and believes with modifications the plan should be found sound. We welcome the opportunity to comment on the Inspector’s Matters, Issues and Questions and provide the following responses to selected questions in so far as they relate to our previous representations.
2.0 Inspectors Questions

2.1 The omission of a response to a specific question should not be construed as our client having nothing further to add. Our client reserves the right to respond not only to the questions identified in this hearing statement but others as relevant and deemed necessary during the hearing session(s).

2.2 The questions are taken in order of publication within the Matters, Issues and Questions document (ref: INSP4).

Q3.1. Is the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in policy 1 consistent with national policy and would it be effective in helping decision makers know how to react to development proposals?

2.3 Our client considers policy 1 is largely consistent with national policy, though considers policy 1(B) needs rewording to be consistent with paragraph 11(c) of the National Planning Policy Framework which requires planning applications which accord with an up-to-date development plan to be approved without delay.

Q3.2. Is the broad spatial distribution of development proposed in policies 2 and 3 justified? In particular, the aims to accommodate:

a) At least 50% of new homes in and around the Main Urban Area; approximately 40% at seven Main Towns; and about 10% at ten Service Towns and Villages.

b) The ranges for the number of new homes in and around each of the individual Main Towns and Service Towns and Villages.

c) Major new employment sites in locations accessible from the Main Urban Area and Main Towns in locations attractive to the market with good access to the strategic transport network as well as Doncaster Sheffield Airport.

d) Retail, leisure, office, cultural and tourist developments in the network of town centres defined in Table 2.

2.4 Our client is supportive of the general principal that the majority of new development will be distributed in the Main Urban Area of Doncaster, the 7 Main Towns and the 10 Service Town and Villages. The identification of Bawtry as a Service Town and Village is supported as it is a high performing settlement
which provides a variety of primary services and is well serviced by local services, amenities and public transport connections.

2.5 In terms of new homes, Policy 2 seeks to deliver at least 50% within the ‘Main Urban Area’ of Doncaster and 40% within the 7 ‘Main Towns’ with just 10% allocated to the ‘Service Towns and Villages’. In the Case of Bawtry itself, Policy 3 identifies a requirement for growth of 110 dwellings across the plan period. However, the Council propose to allocate only 90 dwellings in the settlement, split between sites with and without planning permission; meaning there is a 20-dwelling shortfall between the number of units allocated and the settlement target growth. The Council’s justification for this is provided in paragraph 16.194 of the Local Plan which states, in summary, that meeting the 20-dwelling shortfall in Bawtry would require large urban extensions not appropriate for such a shortfall in the supply. The Council suggest that windfall development in the settlement across the plan period would make up the shortfall. Our client is concerned with any reduction or limitation on the housing target for a settlement purely on the basis that it is in a Green Belt location. The housing target for a settlement should be focused on the need to ensure the settlement can grow in a sustainable manner to support the local community and its population. Housing allocations, and Green Belt release, should then be made according to meeting that need.

2.6 As discussed within our earlier representation to the Council on 30th September 2019 (Appendix 1, section 5), it is considered between 18 – 20 units can be discounted from Bawtry’s supply, resulting in a potential housing shortfall of 40 dwellings over the plan period. Appropriately, the Council are required allocate further land in Bawtry to ensure housing need in the settlement can be met. This provides justification, in addition to that provided previously, for the allocation of the site Land West of Bawtry Hall.

2.7 The appended site promotion document outlines the sustainability credentials of the site and provides a concept masterplan for its development.

Q3.3. Is the broad spatial distribution of development proposed by the employment and housing allocations in policies 4 and 6 justified having regard to the aims set out in policies 2 and 3? Are any main modifications required to ensure that the Plan is unambiguous and
internally consistent in this respect?

2.8 Our client is broadly supportive of the spatial distribution of housing development; however, I refer to the answer given in respect of Q3.2.

**Q3.4. Is the suggested change to policy 2 set out in the Council’s response to PQ14 necessary to make the Plan sound?**

2.9 Our client considers the suggested change to policy 2 is an improvement in that it provides further clarity for the decision-maker on how the policy should be applied. Notwithstanding this, the policy is considered to take an overly restrictive approach to residential development outside defined settlement boundaries and fails to allow for the consideration of the sustainability of countryside sites. This restrictive policy is contrary to national policy as it does not promote sustainable development in rural areas; a requirement of paragraph 78 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

**Q3.5. Is the approach to deciding development proposals based on the figures for new homes set out in policy 3 for Doncaster Main Urban Area, the Main Towns and the Service Towns and Larger Villages justified, and is it sufficiently clear to be effective?**

2.10 Our client is broadly supportive of the proposed distribution of development though refers to the answer given in respect of Q3.2.

2.11 Furthermore, our client considers that a more flexible approach needs to be taken to meet housing needs across the settlement hierarchy. Policy 3 identifies the number of dwellings which are to be provided within settlements across the plan period; in the case of Service Towns and Larger Villages, it is anticipated that 10% of the boroughs total housing would be planned here. This has been distributed across the 10 settlements in this category with Bawtry identified for 110 homes. Our client considers it important that this figure is not used as a maximum, but instead a minima to ensure housing needs can be met in a flexible way which is responsive to the local needs of each settlement over the plan period.
Appendix 1: Previous Consultation Response
Appendix 2: Site Promotion Document