For and on behalf of
Mr RJ Ogley (03008)
Minerals Investments Ltd (Mr Ian Brealey) (03116)
Higgins Agriculture Ltd and Bellway Homes (03467)
South Yorkshire Housing Association (05214)

DONCASTER LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION
STAGE 4 HEARING SESSION REPRESENTATION
MATTER 3 STRATEGIC APPROACH

Site Allocation Ref: 040 - Land off Sheffield Road, Conisbrough
HELAA Site Ref: 184 - Brodsworth Quarry, Green Lane, Doncaster
Site Ref: 189 - Higgins Site, Old Bawtry Road, Finningley
Site Ref: 446 – Mosham Road / land east of Hurst Lane, Auckley

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.0 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 RESPONSE TO INSPECTORS QUESTIONS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This representation has been prepared by DLP Planning Ltd on behalf of Mr RJ Ogley, Minerals Investments Ltd (Mr Ian Brealey), Higgins Agriculture Ltd* and Bellway Homes, and South Yorkshire Housing Association in response to the Stage 4 Examination Hearing Sessions of the Doncaster Local Plan.

1.2 This representation addresses Matter 3 in relation to the following sites:

- Site Allocation Ref: 040 - Land off Sheffield Road, Conisbrough
- HELAA Site Ref: 184 - Brodsworth Quarry, Green Lane, Doncaster
- Site Ref: 189 - Higgins Site, Old Bawtry Road, Finningley
- Site Ref: 446 – Mosham Road / land east of Hurst Lane, Auckley

1.3 This document should be read alongside previous representations on the publication version of the Plan, as submitted in September 2019.

*NB - The representor (03467) previously referred to as Higgins Agriculture Ltd is herein referred to as M Higgins Ltd.
2.0 RESPONSE TO INSPECTORS QUESTIONS

Matter 3 – Strategic Approach

Issue - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

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?

2.1 The presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in policy 1 is consistent with national policy, including at part b which replicates paragraph 11c of the NPPF that planning applications that accord with the Development Plan policies will be approved without delay.

2.2 In addition, part b of policy 1 also requires accordance with Neighbourhood Plan policies where relevant. Notwithstanding the fact that Neighbourhood Plan policies and material considerations are not referenced in paragraph 11c of the NPPF, they are considered acceptable to include in policy 1 because Neighbourhood Plans form part of a Local Planning Authority’s policy framework once they are adopted and their policies carry weight, and because other material considerations (including the NPPF) are considered as part of planning applications anyway.

2.3 Similarly, part c of policy 1 replicates paragraph 11d of the NPPF and is therefore consistent with the NPPF.

2.4 It is considered that policy 1 would be effective in helping decision makers know how to react to development proposals.

Issue - Spatial Strategy

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.

2.5 Policy 2 firstly sets out that at least 50% of new homes will go to the ‘Main Urban Area’, approximately 40% to the ‘Main Towns’ and about 10% to the ‘Service Towns and Villages’.
Policy 2 then sets out that housing allocations and mixed-use allocations to accommodate economic-led housing growth are directed to the most sustainable and deliverable urban and urban extension sites in the Doncaster Main Urban Area and Main Towns. In short, there is no development being focussed within Service Towns and Villages. Further to this, the Defined Villages do not have allocations for new development.

2.6 Policy 3 then sets out that the growth (referencing housing only) is distributed as follows to meet the Local Plan's Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy:

- Doncaster Main Urban Area: 6,805 – 7,315 homes
- Main Towns: 2,985 – 6,715 homes (note, this is the total of all of the referenced towns range figures combined)
- Service Towns and Larger Villages: 1,360 homes (note, this is the total of all of the referenced towns and villages figures combined)

2.7 The Local Plan as drafted is overly reliant on a significant quantum of sites within the Main Urban Area. This approach relies on the delivery of a notable number of large sites which will require substantial enabling infrastructure in order to deal with potential constraints (such as contamination, highways infrastructure upgrades, and drainage).

2.8 The growth potential of a number of Service Towns and Larger Villages, and Defined Villages, has been underplayed. For example, there should be an increased allocation of housing land in settlements such as Finningley, Auckley and Highfields/Woodlands in order to capture the regeneration opportunities provided by being in close proximity to larger towns with provision of local transport links and facilities and services (and in the case of Finningley and Auckley in particular, Doncaster Sheffield Airport) and to deliver housing in sustainable locations where there is a recognised demand. Further to this, only having such limited housing apportioned to the Service Towns and Villages, and no allocations for new development in Defined Villages, could see a decline in the settlements, as well as likely resulting in missed opportunities to support economic growth.

2.9 Further to the above, the housing allocations requirements should not be based purely on the hierarchy of a settlement as there are a number of considerations – namely urban capacity, need and demand for housing, regeneration, and environmental and social
considerations – which need to be taken into account to ensure the growth of settlements in a sustainable manner.

2.10 In summary, all sites that were previously promoted to the Council during the Local Plan process – whether it be for housing, employment or mixed use development – should have been thoroughly considered for allocation based on factors such as their individual attributes, where and how the site sits within the wider context of the Borough, and how the site can assist with housing and employment growth, as well as consideration being given to their location within the Settlement Hierarchy. Policies 2 and 3, and the housing and employment allocations, should have then sought to disburse the targeted locations for development and growth more widely (as discussed above). It is notable that comments that DLP Planning Ltd have prepared in relation to other matters, such as Matter 2, address this point from the perspective of how the Sustainability Appraisal (CSD7.1) failed to consider reasonable alternatives.

2.11 More importantly, the justification for allocating less sustainable sites is lacking and as such these allocations are unsound as they are not based upon proportionate evidence.

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?

2.12 The new employment allocations in policy 4 are generally consistent with policy 2 in that four of the six new employment allocations are located within the ‘Main Urban Area’ and ‘Main Towns’. The remaining two new employment allocations are located in ‘Service Towns and Villages’. However, they are still considered to be generally consistent with the aims of policy 2 because they located in Finningley in close proximity to the Airport (site ref. 941), and in Carcroft directly to the east of the existing industrial estate (site ref. 441) which is located in close proximity to the A19 and Adwick train station.

2.13 The new housing allocations in policy 6 are generally consistent with policy 2 and 3 in relation to the Settlement Hierarchy and where growth is proposed to be distributed in that the housing allocations (some of which have planning permission and some of which do not) are located within the Main Urban Area, the Main Towns, and the Service Towns and Larger Villages.
2.14 Notwithstanding the above, whether the employment and housing allocations are justified having regard to the aims set out in policies 2 and 3 is a different consideration. Paragraph 35 of the NPPF sets out the four criterions for a Plan to be considered sound, one of which is ‘justified’. Justified is defined in the NPPF (paragraph 35 b) as “an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence”. As discussed previously under Q3.2, the Local Plan as drafted is overly reliant on a significant quantum of sites within the Main Urban Area and the growth potential of a number of Service Towns and Larger Villages, and Defined Villages, has been underplayed. Also, limiting the opportunities for new development in the Service Towns and Villages, and the Defined Villages, is likely to result in missed opportunities to support economic growth. Further to this, allocations requirements should not be based purely on the hierarchy of a settlement as there are a number of considerations – such as urban capacity, need and demand for housing, and regeneration – that need to be taken into account to ensure the growth of settlements in a sustainable manner.

2.15 Further to the above, there were failings in the Sustainability Appraisal (CSD7.1) because there were some sites that were previously promoted to the Council during the Local Plan process as reasonable alternatives to accommodate development, compared to sites that are subject to flood restraint or are suitable for agricultural use, that were not adequately considered as “reasonable alternatives” within the Sustainability Appraisal (CSD7.1). An example of one such reasonable alternative previously promoted for mixed use but not considered in the development of the strategy as a “reasonable alternative” is the site at Brodsworth Quarry (site ref. 184), which comprises of approximately 61 hectares of land adjacent to the western settlement boundary of Highfields, and immediately south of Adwick le Street.

2.16 In addition to the above, the Sustainability Appraisal (CSD7.1) at paragraph 3.1 and tables 8.17 and 8.23 assessed the allocated site 940 (Site 1 Land east of the Poplars) as scoring worse than both site 446 (Blaxton Quarry Phase 1) and site 189 (Higgins, Finningley). This approach is considered to be unsound. It is not considered appropriate that such limited levels of allocations have been identified in reasonably sized settlements such as Finningley, with the only justification put forward for failing to allocate new sites for development being based on existing permissions within the settlements, which have yet to be delivered and may suffer from issues including viability that could impact future development.
2.17 Table 7.26 of the Sustainability Appraisal (CSD7.1) simply sets out the Council’s reasons for selecting and rejecting potential housing sites, and it is clear that rather than being a tool for planning sustainable plan making the Sustainability Appraisal (CSD7.1) appears to have been retrofitted to support certain site selections. In the case of site 940, it does not justify an allocation of this size and its impact given the more sustainable reasonable alternatives with a similar spatial relationship to the airport, as is the case with sites 446 and 189. Indeed site 189 is identified for residential development within the DSA Masterplan, as set out in Reg 19 representations regarding the site.

2.18 It would appear that reducing the size of the allocation at Poplars (site 940) to less than the 1,200 dwellings proposed and a redistribution to these other more sustainable sites would deliver not only the sustainability benefits identified in the Sustainability Appraisal (CSD7.1) but also reduce the harmful impact of site 940 and assist in the general rate of delivery by expanding the choice of location and developers as recommended by the Letwin Report.

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

2.19 No further comment.

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?

2.20 The figures for new homes set out in policy 3 generally correspond with policy 2 in that they set out for at least 50% of new homes to go to the ‘Main Urban Area’, approximately 40% to go to the ‘Main Towns’, and about 10% to go to the ‘Service Towns and Villages’.

2.21 Notwithstanding the above, policy 3 states that the Local Plan’s strategic aim is to facilitate the delivery of (amongst other things):

“18,400 new homes in the period 2015 – 2035 (920 per annum), with sufficient land allocated to deliver 15 years’ supply of housing (13,230, or 882 dwellings per annum, once supply in the years 2015 – 2018 is deducted from the overall requirement). For the purposes of calculating 5-year housing land supply, the requirement will be based on the Local Housing Need figure, as derived from the Standard Methodology, which will be reviewed and revised throughout the plan period in line with the latest household projections and affordability ratio. As such, the housing requirement is expressed as a range with the bottom of the range being the Local Housing Need figure and the top of the range being 920 dwellings per annum.”
2.22 For the reasons given in DLP Planning Ltd’s submission for Matter 2 it is considered that the housing requirement should be increased to 1,073 dpa so that it correctly reflects the evidence base.

2.23 It is unclear what the purpose is of the table directly below policy 3 which sets out how growth will be distributed - the total range figures for Doncaster Main Urban Area, Main Towns, and Service Towns and Larger Villages combined is 11,150 – 15,390 homes. These total range figures do not correspond with the figures (13,230 and 18,400) stated in policy 3. These total range figures also do not correspond with the Council stating that the housing requirement for the Plan period (2015-2035) is a range: 11,700 (20 x 585) to 18,400 (20 x 920) (as stated in the MIQs / the Council’s response to PQ21 (INSP4 and DMBC7)).

2.24 The Local Plan should not set upper limits for development, and while this might suggest that the upper range in this table should be deleted it has been established in our submissions on Matter 2 that the Plan should plan for a higher level of housing provision than that suggested by standard methodology. As such, it should be the lower of the range that should be deleted.

2.25 It should be made clear in the commentary to the policy that the Local Plan will identify allocations to meet the levels of development for each of these locations and that these are not targets or maxima and that they can be exceeded.

2.26 Further to the above, the total Defined Village cumulative growth limit (over the Plan period) for all of the listed Defined Villages combined is 290 homes. However, it is notable that footnote 5 of the publication version draft of the Local Plan sets out that some development may be permissible in the Defined Villages locations up to the cumulative growth limit (in line with and subject to the caveats in policy 2), but any delivery in such locations will be additional to the allocated supply and not form part of it.

2.27 Again, this figure makes sense if it is there to guide the level and scale of allocations, and the introduction to the table should make this clear as already stated.

2.28 The figure for Finningley is considered to be misleading as it suggests that there will be allocations for just 55 dwellings. This is the lowest figure amongst all of the Service Towns and Larger Villages and yet it is one of the most sustainable, being the focus for public transport and having its own railway station. This figure is completely misleading as it fails to
recognise the 1,200 dwellings allocated on site 940 which if included will completely alter the balance set out in policy 3.

2.29 As previously stated we do not seek to object to this level of housing at Finningley but consider that it would be more sustainable if the level of development on this single site was reduced and that alternative sites be allocated, such as the Higgins site (site ref 189) and 446 (Blaxton Quarry Phase 1), which comprises part brownfield land directly adjacent to the airport and should be considered as a suitable alternative to reduce the harm that would result from the development of site 940. Such a redistribution would also assist in a number of areas in terms of delivery of housing and facilities (including the airport community railway station).

2.30 The level of housing proposed at Adwick & Woodlands fails to recognise the clear opportunity there is to secure a sustainable development at the Brodsworth Quarry site. This appears to be an opportunity which the Council simply chose to exclude from the Sustainability Appraisal (CSD7.1).

2.31 As referenced previously in Q3.3, paragraph 35 of the NPPF sets out the four criterions for a Plan to be considered sound, one of which is ‘justified’. Justified is defined in the NPPF (paragraph 35 b) as “an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence”.