EiP Matter Representation (EiP Ref 05023)

EiP representation ref: 05023

DMBC Local Plan site ref: 929 – Land to the North of Cadeby Road, Sprotbrough

Representation prepared by site owners and promoters: Richard and Michelle Lewis

Representation being made on following EiP Matters and Questions:

- Matter 1 (question 1.10) – written representation only

- Matter 4 (questions 4.1 to 4.11 inclusive) – written representation and EiP attendance in person by Rob Moore, Associate Director of Planning, Savills

Submission date to DMBC Local Plan Inspector: 1st September 2020

PURPOSE

This Matter statement re-states the key points of our original representation and answers the Inspector’s issues and questions for those Matters we have requested to make representation on.

SUMMARY OF ORIGINAL REPRESENTATION

Our most recent representation made the following key points to help support the retention of the site’s status as an allocated residential development site in the Local Plan and the removal of its Green Belt status:

- The site’s strong deliverability, sustainability and viability credentials.

- The site is wholly owned by the site promoters, Mr Richard and Mrs Michelle Lewis, and there are no tenancies, mortgagees or other encumbrances preventing the land being brought on to the open market immediately and developed for residential housing over the next 1-5 years to contribute to the Borough’s supply.

- The failure of the Green Belt immediately adjacent to the site to fulfil its core legal requirement under chapter 13 of the NPPF of preventing urban sprawl and having not prevented residential development on Green Belt.
- The minimal role played by the site in its Green Belt purposes under section 13 of the NPPF. The site is effectively encircled on three sides by a public park, residential development and equine/leisure development.

- An opportunity to create a new strong, defensible and permanent Green Belt boundary that will be fully compliant with chapter 13 of the NPPF.

- The extensive pre-existing (circa 15%) development of the site’s area near its southern boundary with Cadeby Road to support the owners’ equine and leisure interests.

- The potential to accommodate more of the Local Plan housing allocation of 95 units for Sprotbrough by accounting for the correct site size of 2.85 hectares and achieving a higher density in line with chapter 11 of the NPPF and Policy 43 (Good Urban design) of the Local Plan.

- The need to retain a vibrant community and local economy within Sprotbrough village by accommodating modest and sustainable housing growth which will help provide much needed starter homes, a provision of affordable homes and more options for older residents wishing to stay within the locality but down-size.

- Availability of all key services either on-site (to serve the site’s existing equine developments) or running along the site’s Melton Road and Cadeby Road boundaries. Additionally, Yorkshire Water had already provided written confirmation of the ability of the nearby sewer termination point on Cadeby Road to accommodate a residential development of the level proposed.

- The significant level of pre-work undertaken by the site owners and the written expressions of interest in acquiring and developing the site from a number of local and national housebuilders which further demonstrate the site’s strong deliverability and viability potential, enabling a planning application to be brought forward quickly.

- Further technical surveys had been commissioned to help assess the traffic, transport, ecology and green space impacts of the site’s development and would be presented as part of our Matter statement.

The completed technical surveys are key to further demonstrating the site’s strong deliverability, sustainability and viability credentials and these reports are appended to this document and are briefly summarised below:

- A Highway Feasibility Report has been completed by Curtins, a leading traffic and transport consultancy (refer Appendix 2 to this submission) and in summary concludes that the potential residential development is deliverable and sustainable from a traffic and transport perspective. An extract of the report’s summary and conclusion sections is provided below:

"No accidents have been recorded in the immediate vicinity of the existing site access during the three-year assessment period. There is nothing to
suggest an existing safety issue and the accident record is considered to be enviable.

Suitable access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists to the potential residential development can all be provided from the local highway network surrounding the site.

A site access strategy has been put forward for the potential development, which includes a vehicular access option, directly from Melton Road. The junction has been designed in accordance with relevant design standards.

The internal layout of the site will be designed to conform to the guidance outlined in local design guidance, MfS and MfS2, including consideration of suitable parking provision, circulation and refuse vehicle access.

The site can be considered to be accessible by sustainable modes of travel. There are existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the vicinity of the site, and the development would be well situated to take advantage of the bus facilities within the surrounding area. In the event of a future planning application at the site, and if deemed necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, consideration could be given to enhancing/reinforcing the local public transport services and infrastructure.

It is not considered that a potential development would have a material impact on the surrounding highway network. An initial high-level review suggests that the local highway network operates well during peak hours. As a result, off-site junction capacity does not therefore present a material concern in the context the site’s potential for a residential development at this stage.

Conclusions

Based on the above, it is considered that the potential residential development is deliverable from a traffic and transportation perspective.”

- FPCR Environment & Design Ltd were commissioned to complete an Ecological Assessment of the site (refer Appendix 3 to this submission) and this is summarised by FPCR as follows:

“No statutory or non-statutory ecological designations are present within the Site. A number of designated sites are present in the wider environment, but the proposals would not directly affect the conservation value of the sites. Over the operational phase, any effect of increased recreational pressure on designated sites could be managed through the application of appropriate measures including the provision of information leaflet for new residents, the provision of open space within the site and the creation of links to existing open space surrounding the site.

The dominant habitat within the Site was species poor semi-improved grassland, a habitat type which is a common and widespread habitat type
locally, regionally and nationally. The grassland is of limited species diversity, dominated by common / widespread species and as such the grassland was identified as being of low ecological importance. Other habitats present included tall ruderal vegetation, scattered trees and a dry pond. These habitats were also recorded as being of low ecological importance. Hedgerows were present on the site boundaries but from a botanical perspective these features were not assessed as ecologically important.

From this assessment, loss of the habitats within the site would not result in significant negative effects to biodiversity locally and mitigation for any habitat loss can be provided through the provision of native species scrub planting and species rich grassland in the landscape proposals or where appropriate through offsite enhancements. Where possible, the retention and enhancement of boundary hedgerow is recommended but minor losses to facilitate site access are unlikely to result in significant effects.

It is unlikely that the proposals will affect a bat roost and any habitat loss is unlikely to significantly affect the local foraging resource for bats. The habitat within the site only provided a limited resource for great crested newts if present in the site or the wider environment. If either of these species are present the application of standard mitigation in the planting scheme and the implementation of a low-level lighting scheme would provide adequate mitigation for the species and the presence of such species is not considered as a significant ecological constraint to the proposals. No additional protected species issues were recorded during the survey.”

- An updated master plan has been produced with an illustrative site layout showing that up to 95 residential units could be accommodated on the site whilst still meeting all NPPF, PGG and Local Plan policy requirements and can address the Inspector’s recommendation for additional Green Belt buffering when creating the new defensible Green Belt boundary to the west of the site (refer Appendix 1 to this report). This master plan has been informed by the Highways Feasibility Report, the Habitat Survey and Ecological Assessment and has been produced by Savills who are one of the UK’s leading planning consultancies and land disposal experts.
RESPONSES TO MATTERS & QUESTIONS

MATTER 1

Q1.10. Does the Plan set an appropriate framework, and allow an appropriate role, for neighbourhood plans having regard to current progress in their preparation in the Borough? In particular:
   a) Does the Plan appropriately identify “strategic policies”?
   b) To be effective, is it necessary for the Plan to be modified to include a housing requirement for each designated neighbourhood area?

Response: we support DMBC’s response to question 1.10 and their approach of not including specific housing requirements for individual areas. Insofar as the emerging Neighbourhood Plan for Sprotbrough is concerned, whilst we agree that it is important to differentiate between the Neighbourhood area and the settlement boundary, we feel that section 38(5) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act has some bearing here whereby it states that greater weight should be afforded to the latest adopted document i.e. the Local Plan.

The Sprotbrough Neighbourhood Champions group has been tasked by Sprotbrough & Cusworth Parish Council with producing the emerging Sprotbrough Neighbourhood Plan. The Chair of the Neighbourhood Champions group (Eric Mirfin) has verbally confirmed to the site owner (Mr Lewis) during July 2020 that the Neighbourhood Champions:

   - Would prefer no development at all within Sprotbrough village i.e. to the west of the A1
   - Remain completely neutral in terms of site preference should development have to take place within Sprotbrough
   - Stand behind the Green Belt sustainability assessment undertaken for the DMBC Local Plan which has identified site ref 929 as being the least sensitive in Green Belt terms.

The current draft Sprotbrough Neighbourhood Plan (extracted 1st September 2020 from the Neighbourhood Champions website), section 98, would appear to be aligned to the latest Local Plan as it states:

"98 The Publication Version of the Doncaster Local Plan proposes a site allocation, Site 929; Land North of Cadeby Road, Sprotbrough. Paragraph 16.229 explains, "As at 1st April 2018, there are no permissions for the village on sites large enough to allocate through the Local Plan (5+ units remaining) meaning that the full requirement remains to be met through new allocations. A single greenfield urban extension, on land formerly designated as Green Belt, to the north of Cadeby Road and to the west of the village is allocated for 80 new homes. The shortfall of 15 units compared to the village’s housing requirement is proposed to be made good through windfall development throughout the plan period as well as capacity from small sites permissioned (1-4 units) as at April 2018. Any further allocations would require an additional, and very substantial, Green Belt site, which is not justified, nor can exceptional circumstances be demonstrated for further Green Belt to
accommodate such a small shortfall. Allocated supply across the Borough also ensures sufficient allocations are being made to meet the borough-wide housing requirement.”

**MATTER 4**

**Matter 4, Q4.1.** Were all reasonable options for meeting identified development needs in non-Green Belt locations fully examined during the preparation of the Plan? In particular

a) Does the Plan make as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land?

b) Would the Plan be effective in optimising the density of development and making effective use of land in line with chapter 11 of the NPPF?

c) What would the consequences be for sustainable development of accommodating all development needed during the Plan period in non-Green Belt locations?

d) Was the Plan informed by discussions with neighbouring authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the Borough’s identified need for development?

**Response:**

(a) Yes, insofar as site ref 929 is concerned. Sprotbrough village is entirely constrained by Green Belt, therefore exceptional circumstances do exist to warrant its removal in a poor performing location in accordance with paragraph 136 of the NPPF.

There are no brownfield sites in Sprotbrough village. Under-utilised land potentially exists on larger house plots, particularly those along Melton Road and on Park Drive and nearby areas. However, there has already been substantial back land development on many of these larger house plots and this has now resulted in a Local Plan policy proposal to prevent any further back land development within certain areas of Sprotbrough village. Consequently, there is minimal availability of under-utilised land for further residential development.

(b) Yes. The revised master plan for site ref 929 which accompanies this representation has been prepared by Savills planning team and is in conformity with all relevant NPPF and PPG requirements and demonstrates that, insofar as site ref 929 is concerned, the density of development can be optimised and deliver up to the full Local Plan allocation of 95 homes for Sprotbrough. This allows the allocation of a single Green Belt site to meet all housing requirements during the Plan period and contains the use of Green Belt to the absolute minimum needed to help deliver the Local Plan’s spatial strategy.
(c) Not relevant in relation to Sprotbrough village and the requirement of the Local Plan spatial strategy requirement for 95 new homes in Sprotbrough village. There are no non-Green Belt options in Sprotbrough village, and the lack of residential development sites is further restricted by the policy proposal in the Local Plan which prevents further back land developments within parts of Sprotbrough village that contain the majority of the largest house plots.

(d) No further comment.

Matter 4, Q4.2. Assuming it is necessary to remove land from the Green Belt, did the approach taken in the Plan give first consideration to land which has been previously developed and/or is well served by public transport?

Response: Yes. There are no options in Sprotbrough village to use land which has been previously developed. There are no brownfield sites and the potential to undertake further back land development on larger housing plots is being constrained by a specific policy change within the Local Plan.

Matter 4, Q4.3. Would development on each of the eight housing allocations removed from the Green Belt promote sustainable patterns of development?

Response: Yes, insofar as site ref 929 is concerned. Chapter 13 of the NPPF, section 138 states that when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should be considered. The summary and conclusions sections of the Highways Feasibility Report commissioned for the site (and which is attached as Appendix 2 to this submission) states that:

"No accidents have been recorded in the immediate vicinity of the existing site access during the three-year assessment period. There is nothing to suggest an existing safety issue and the accident record is considered to be enviable.

Suitable access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists to the potential residential development can all be provided from the local highway network surrounding the site.

A site access strategy has been put forward for the potential development, which includes a vehicular access option, directly from Melton Road. The junction has been designed in accordance with relevant design standards."
The internal layout of the site will be designed to conform to the guidance outlined in local design guidance, MfS and MfS2, including consideration of suitable parking provision, circulation and refuse vehicle access.

The site can be considered to be accessible by sustainable modes of travel. There are existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the vicinity of the site, and the development would be well situated to take advantage of the bus facilities within the surrounding area. In the event of a future planning application at the site, and if deemed necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, consideration could be given to enhancing/reinforcing the local public transport services and infrastructure.

It is not considered that a potential development would have a material impact on the surrounding highway network. An initial high-level review suggests that the local highway network operates well during peak hours. As a result, off-site junction capacity does not therefore present a material concern in the context the site’s potential for a residential development at this stage.

Conclusions

Based on the above, it is considered that the potential residential development is deliverable from a traffic and transportation perspective.”

Matter 4, Q4.4. How would development on each of the eight housing allocations removed from the Green Belt affect the purposes of including land in the Green Belt?

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area.
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Response: For site ref 929 in Sprotbrough village:

- **Checking the unrestricted sprawl of a large built-up area**: Sprotbrough village is already relatively self-contained and separated from Doncaster’s Main Urban Area to the east by the A1 motorway and Green Belt sites to the east of the A1. Site ref 929 is located to the west of Sprotbrough village and therefore serves no role in preventing the sprawl of (or the merging with) the Doncaster Main Urban Area. It does however play a modest role in preventing the sprawl of Sprotbrough village in a western direction towards Cadeby and High Melton and this is covered in more detail in the next response.

- **Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another**: site ref 929 is right-sized relative to the Local Plan housing allocation for Sprotbrough village.
The revised master plan which accompanies this representation (refer Appendix 1) demonstrates that up to the entire Local Plan allocation of 95 homes can be accommodated on this single site and thereby avoid the need to release other much larger Green Belt sites, some of which would have resulted in significantly greater expansion of Sprotbrough village, increasing the risk of sprawl.

The existing Green Belt boundary to the east of site ref 929 has not met its legal requirement of being strong, clear and defensible. It is indented and does not adhere to NPFF requirements. There has already been extensive development in a western direction along the south side of Melton Road which now abuts the eastern boundary of site ref 929 (refer diagram below). Site ref 929 is denoted by the red boundary and the homes shaded red have been built in the greenbelt in the last 20 years.

**MAP SHOWING RECENT GREENBELT ENCROACHMENT (SHADED RED) ADJACENT TO SITE REF 929**
The site therefore doesn’t have a material role in preventing Sprotbrough merging with other settlements to the west (Cadeby and High Melton) as these are still more than two kilometres from the site’s western boundary and the site’s narrow (east to west) profile limits expansion in this western direction.

A form of site development as illustrated in the master plan in Appendix 1 would round off the core shape and form of the settlement and provide a defined settlement edge.

Furthermore, existing housing development already protrudes west along 50% the site’s northern boundary and (together with the current on-site equine development) along the full extent of the southern boundary (Melton Road and Cadeby Road respectively). The net effect of developing this Green Belt site (after accounting for the adjacent public park) is a very modest expansion of only 40 metres westwards towards adjacent villages of Cadeby and High Melton.

The illustrative site layout in Appendix 1 indicates the opportunity to create a revised settlement boundary that is more rounded to contain the recent westward sprawl along Melton Road and which could also replace the current indented settlement boundary.

In summary, site ref 929 serves only a minimal role in preventing urban sprawl as it is largely encircled by existing residential and leisure (equine) developments and is effectively infill development which represents minimal expansion towards adjacent settlements in a western direction (net 40 metres).

- **Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment:** refer previous response and diagram for questions 4.4. Green Belt encroachment has already occurred immediately to the east of the site and existing developments already extend along 50% of the site’s northern boundary and 100% of the southern boundary. The site’s eastern boundary is an established hedgerow but is gappy in places and much of the hedge has been recently re-planted by the site owners. Removal of the site from greenbelt would allow the site’s western boundary hedge, which is strong, defensible and clearly delineated (together with additional buffering recommended by the Inspector) to create a new Green Belt boundary which fully adheres to NPPF guidelines.

- **Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land:** there is no derelict or other urban land in Sprotbrough village. Site ref 929 therefore serves no purpose for this Green Belt objective.
Response: Yes. The revised Green Belt boundaries to site ref 929 fully adhere to NPPF guidelines and meet the core legal requirement of being strong and defensible. The revised greenbelt boundaries are as follows:

- To the north, Melton Road
- To the south, Cadeby Road
- To the west, an established ancient hedgerow which was on the 1711 OS map. This will be strengthened with additional buffering as recommended by the Planning Inspector and is reflected in the revised master plan which accompanies this representation (refer Appendix 1).

Response: No, in respect of site ref 929. The NPPF aim is to minimise greenbelt encroachment. The release of any further greenbelt sites or allocation as reserve sites would result in significantly increased housing allocations which far exceed the Local Plan requirements and potentially result in unsustainable development. Site ref 929 is right-sized relative to the Local Plan housing allocation for Sprotbrough village and the revised master plan which accompanies this representation (refer Appendix 1) demonstrates that the site can accommodate up to the full Local Plan requirement of 95 units whilst fully conforming to NPPF and PPG requirements.

Response: Yes. We support DMBC’s proposal to secure compensatory improvements to remaining Green Belt land through the provision of expansions to Rossington Country Park.
The Habitat Survey and Ecological Assessment for site ref 929 (refer Appendix 3) demonstrates that the master plan for site ref 929 (refer Appendix 1) includes adequate green infrastructure within the site to mitigate ecology impacts resulting from the proposed development of the site and provides adequate links to recreational resources immediately to the east of the site and, indirectly, to others to the south and west.

**Matter 4, Q4.8. Have exceptional circumstances to justify removing each of the eight housing allocations from the Green Belt been fully evidenced and justified?**

**Response:** Yes. The Local Plan spatial strategy requires provision for 95 extra housing units in Sprotbrough village during the Plan period. There are no brownfield options in Sprotbrough village. There is minimal opportunity to use under-utilised land in the form of large housing plots for back land development given policy changes advocated in the Local Plan to prevent further back land development in the parts of Sprotbrough village that contain the larger housing plots.

Sprotbrough village is fully encircled by Green Belt but is a thriving, vibrant and sustainable population centre. The limited availability of new homes is resulting in the following notable local demographic trends in Sprotbrough village:

- Older residents preferring to remain in the locality have limited options to down-size and therefore remain in larger homes
- Younger residents who wish to remain within the village have limited options due to lack of affordable homes and lack of new homes generally resulting in multi-generation households and localised car parking problems. The last significant housing development in Sprotbrough village (St Mary’s Walk on Boat Lane) was undertaken over 10 years ago.
- Places at village schools and nursery are increasingly filled by people who live outside Sprotbrough village due to limited options for new families to move to the village (and existing families with older children wishing to remain) and which is exacerbating local traffic congestion, particularly at school times.

More homes are needed in Sprotbrough village to help the long-term sustainability of the village in accordance with paragraph 78 of the NPPF and the release of Green Belt is the only way of achieving this. Site ref 929 is a sustainable, viable and deliverable site supported by willing site owners. The Local Plan Green Belt sustainability assessment which favours site ref 929 over other Sprotbrough sites has been undertaken by Arup who are independent consultants.
Matter 4, Q4.9. Have exceptional circumstances to justify making the other changes to the Green Belt referred to in the Council’s response to PQ8 been fully evidenced and justified?

Response: Yes, in respect of site ref 929. However, further evidence and justification for this Green Belt change could have been more clearly demonstrated in DMBC’s responses to the Inspector’s preliminary questions by indicating where this Green Belt has been built upon and where it has therefore failed in one of its primary legal purposes of providing a clear and defensible boundary and thereby more clearly demonstrate that exceptional circumstances exist. The map below provided in response to an earlier question also attempts to show the extent to which this Green Belt has been recently developed (in last 20 years).

MAP SHOWING RECENT GREENBELL ENCROACHMENT (SHADE RED) ADJACENT TO SITE REF 929
Matter 4, Q4.10. Assuming that I conclude that the Plan identifies sufficient land to ensure that justified development needs can be met in suitable locations throughout the Plan period, would there be exceptional circumstances to justify taking additional land out of the Green Belt at the present time, for example to try to ensure that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered again at the end of the Plan period?

Response: No, in respect of Sprotbrough village and site ref 929. Whilst some exceptional circumstances, such as the lack of available brownfield sites and lack of under-utilised land are unlikely to change beyond the current Plan period, the housing spatial strategy may change beyond the Plan period such that material numbers of additional homes are deemed not to be necessary in Sprotbrough village. In the current plan period significant investment is being directed to the Doncaster Airport Area, Rossington Freeport and the Hatfield/Thorne area and this may change the balance of future employment and housing requirements across the Local Plan area.

Matter 4, Q4.11. Is policy 2 part 6 justified and consistent with national policy relating to development in the Green Belt, in particular that related to “limited infilling in villages”?

Response: With regard to the definition of ‘infill development’ in Policy 2 part 6, the NPPF contains no specific definition of this term. We therefore support DMBC’s proposed interpretation and precise definition of ‘infill’ in Policy 2 part 6 as it will help limit outward sprawl (as required by NPFF 13) and therefore help contain erosion of Green Belt whilst enabling limited development that otherwise meets other NPFF requirements, such as sustainability. This ‘infill’ definition may be invaluable for certain settlements located within/adjacent to Green Belt where modest and small-scale infill development may provide an invaluable opportunity to help ensure the viability of these communities.
APPENDIX 2: HIGHWAYS FEASIBILITY REPORT

PROVIDED AS SEPARATE DOCUMENT WITH THIS MATTER STATEMENT DUE TO FILE SIZE
APPENDIX 3: HABITAT SURVEY & ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT SURVEY (PHASE 1) REPORT

PROVIDED AS TWO SEPARATE DOCUMENTS WITH THIS MATTER STATEMENT DUE TO FILE SIZE:

(1) MAIN REPORT

(2) BOTANICAL SPECIES LIST