Examination of the Doncaster Local Plan
Council Hearing Statement

Matter 11. Unity Regeneration Project

September 2020
Q11.1. Is the proposal in policy 70 for a mixed use development between Hatfield and Stainforth as shown on the Policies Map and “inset map” justified and is it likely to be developed in the timescales envisaged during and after the Plan period? In particular:

a) The specific developments (including 1,015 dwellings and 33.6 hectares of employment land during the Plan period) and infrastructure set out in part A and indicated on Figure 17 (“Unity Masterplan: approved outline planning application ref 15/01300/OUTA”).

1. The Unity Project is subject to an extant Outline planning permission (Ref: 15/01300/OUTA) and is a major mixed-use regeneration project at the Main Town of Hatfield-Stainforth-Dunscroft-Dunsville. The scheme includes 3,100 new dwellings, a new local centre including a 2-form entry primary school, circa 66ha of employment land, new marina, and improvements to public transport amongst a number of other contributions and parts of the project (such as Unity Energy which has its own separate planning consent). The scheme represents a large-scale sustainable urban extension to the settlement in line with NPPF paragraph 72a-d and is a long-term project that will be delivering both within and beyond the current Local Plan plan period of 2035. The project to date is a result of a public-private partnership with the Council working with the landowner/developer (Waystone Hargreaves Land LLP) and Homes England and this approach will continue for the foreseeable whilst the project reaches maturity. Representations from the developer support the deliverability of the project, and indeed suggest that Unity can deliver more than the Local Plan identifies in terms of the plan period contribution.

2. More specifically in relation to part a of the question, then Part A of the Local Plan Policy 70 sets out 10 components of the project in line with the Outline consent and the remainder of this response summarises the most notable ones (e.g. housing, employment, and key supporting and enabling infrastructure to unlock phases of the development and ensure the project is sustainable and in line with NPPF paragraph 72a-c).

3. The new M18 Junction 5 Link Road from the settlement is under construction and Balfour Beatty is the main contractor and commenced works in April 2019. The total cost of the project is around £16.7million. It is funded from £11.2m of Sheffield City Region Local Growth Funding, £3.5m from Waystone and the remainder from the Council’s capital programme. The road is due to be open and operational by winter 2020 and is an important prerequisite in terms of unlocking the respective mixed-use components.

4. The policy as drafted supports ‘up to’ 1,015 new dwellings in the plan period, and up to 3,100 new homes during the lifetime of the project.

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1 Junction 5 Link Road Drone Footage April 2020 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9jkPfxAYxU
itself, with at least 0.4ha of land available for self-build. The Local Plan has set out a realistic, but revised, build-out for the project compared to the phasing plan from the Outline consent which reflects that the project is a complex scheme and has experienced some delay getting to this stage. However, significant progress has been made to overcome these barriers and the project is now on track to start to deliver new housing from 2021. That said, the Council would like to suggest a Main Modification to the policy. It has never been the intention that Policy 70 should attempt to limit the amount of housing as part of the Mixed-use allocation in the plan period. As drafted, part A1 and the use of the words ‘up to’ are confused with what the Local Plan primarily needs to be concerning itself with respect to committed sites, which is setting out how much supply we think is reasonably achievable over the plan period for the purposes of borough land supply. Further to this, and as the explanatory text states at paragraph 16.89, the Outline consent includes a condition of no more than 1,200 dwellings by 1st January 2028 in line with the current Development Plan\(^2\), which is of course a higher yield over a shorter timescale than the current wording of Policy 70 so is not consistent. The following Main Modification is necessary to the policy to remedy this:

A).......  

1. **Up to a minimum of 1,015 new homes over the plan period, and up to 3,100 homes over the life of the development, with a minimum of 0.4 hectares of land made available for self-build homes**,  

5. The trajectory to achieve the housing yield for the Local Plan is based on the first 175 dwellings being complete by the end of the first phase of the plan period (i.e. by the 31st March 2023), and then 70dpa for the remainder of the plan period (840 dwellings) which is based on 2 developers being on site. Several pre-commencement conditions have been discharged with respect to ‘Unity Life’ (17/01215/COND) and the Marina development (also part of ‘Unity Life’) has commenced (Ref: 20/01197/REMM).  

6. Two Reserved Matters applications for the first 2 phases of residential development for ‘Unity Living’, which will equate to over 400 units, are due to be submitted imminently. Factoring in the lead-in times for determination and starts on site, 175 dwellings completed (87 per developer) in the last 2.5 years of the first phase of the plan period is considered achievable and quite cautious. 2,085 units are then identified as falling beyond the plan period, although there would be nothing preventing more of this supply coming forward in the plan period (other than the condition of the permission that restricts build-out of no more than 1,200 dwellings before 2028 in line with the Core Strategy) in which case it would form additional supply.

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\(^2\) OTH3 Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012
7. The policy supports ‘up to’ 33.6ha of employment land in the plan period, with the remaining supply falling beyond the plan period (a Main Modification is identified in DMBC15 (page 30) to correct the total amount of employment land to 66ha in line with the consent). Again, in line with the explanation provided for the housing element of the project, it is not the intention that Policy 70 should limit the supply in the plan period for a consented scheme. The Council would like to suggest a further Main Modification to part A2 of the policy in line with that set out for housing above and as follows.

A)....

2. up to a minimum of 33.6 hectares over the plan period, and approximately 66 hectares over the life of the development, of land for business, general industrial and storage and distribution uses,

8. The plan period employment land supply is considered as being achievable. Of the total 66 ha of consented net developable employment land, over 40 hectares is attributed to the ‘Unity Connect’ component of the project adjacent to J5 of the M18. The Reserved Matters application comprising details of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale, for the proposed primary estate road from the Hatfield Link Road into Unity Connect was approved in August 2020 (Ref: 20/01197/REMM). The consent is for a primary estate road that will connect on to the northern spur of the eastern most roundabout of the Hatfield Link Road. The road will extend northwards approximately 750m from the spur into the Unity Connect site. The road will be a key piece of infrastructure, servicing future development parcels within ‘Unity Connect’. Condition 5 of Unity Connection (Ref: 20/01198/COND) has been approved which permits the implementation of the drainage strategy and infrastructure for ‘Unity Connect’.

9. Waystone Hargreaves LLP have recently announced that they have agreed the sale, and exchanged contracts, for a 800,000 sq ft regional distribution centre and training facility for one of the Uk’s fastest growing retailers. This deal itself accounts for over half of the currently consented employment land as part of the ‘Unity Connect’ phase with the vast majority of the plan period still remaining providing confidence that the build-out of employment land attributed to the site in the Local Plan is both realistic and achievable.

10. The policy supports a new local centre including retail, education (new 2-form entry primary school), commercial, healthcare, and community uses etc. This is based on the approved Unity Masterplan as per the Outline consent and primarily makes up the ‘Unity Town’ component of the project. The phasing plan shows (with the exception of the residential elements of this area) that ‘Unity Town’ is part of Phase 4 of the project which is identified as being developed 2029 onwards (so still well before
the end of the plan period) and is phased to be delivered in step with, and following, some of the initial residential and commercial components of the wider Unity Project.

b) The potential uses on the former Hatfield colliery site set out in part D.

11. The Hatfield Colliery site was one of the last active coal mines in the country before its closure in June 2015. The land is currently classed as Crown Land and the debt has been recently bought by Hargreaves Lansdown plc. The extent of the site is identified through the supporting map to the policy on page 217 of the Local Plan. This area is not covered by the Outline planning consent and hence the inclusion of Part D of Policy 70 to guide what would be considered as appropriate uses on the site (i.e. employment/ industrial/ technological/ manufacturing/ leisure/ small-scale ancillary uses).

12. The site is located within the designated Stainforth Neighbourhood Plan area where the emerging Neighbourhood Plan has a clear objective (Objective 1 of the Issues & Options consultation - March 2019) to protect and enhance local mining heritage through the creation of a heritage centre and country park linked to the old pithead site. Paragraph 5.4 of the Neighbourhood Plan states that “the Town Council considers that there are significant opportunities for the development of the site to provide improved local facilities and employment, subject to securing funding and investment. Hatfield Main Heritage Trust was formed in April 2017 with the aim of developing the Pithead site into a heritage centre and country park. The plan for the site includes various workshops, business incubation, conference centre, and a local mining heritage museum.”

13. PPG3 is clear that Local Plans should avoid conflicts with emerging Neighbourhood Plans wherever possible and the Council’s view is that Part D of Policy 70 does just that through setting out a broad range of appropriate uses on the site which the Neighbourhood Plan is then looking to provide more detail and guidance. It should be noted that the country park aspiration of the local community/ emerging Neighbourhood Plan is covered by Part C of Policy 70 and, again, it is not considered that there would be a conflict between the Local Plan (which identifies the laydown area as being subject to a restoration and after care scheme) and the country park proposal.

c) Is the deletion of part D.4 and insertion of new part G relating to the grade II listed headstocks necessary to make the Plan sound?

14. NPPF paragraph 184 is clear that heritage assets of local historic value are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved and enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed by

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3 006 Reference ID: 61-006-20190723
future generations. NPPF paragraph 185 goes on to say that plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk.

15. In November 2015, Historic England listed (grade II) two sets of colliery headstocks on the former Hatfield Colliery site, known as No.1 and No.2. The headstocks were listed primarily for their rarity, their historical significance, and special interest, in that the pair were built in contrasting designs but at the same time in 1922. The response to Question 11.1b above identifies how important these structures are to the local community and aspiration to find an alternative use(s) for them to ensure their long-term conservation and sustainability for the future.

16. The Council, through a Main Modification to the plan (see DMBC 15 page 31) has now suggested that what was formally Part D4 of the policy should now become a new criteria G with some additional policy wording specifically covering the headstocks themselves. This will make explicitly clear (and clearer than the policy does as drafted) that any development of the site should help secure the long-term conservation of the headstocks.

17. The Modification addresses a soundness objection to the draft Policy from Historic England at Regulation 19 stage. The representation identified that the headstocks are a defining feature of the area and therefore their future conservation, together with how any future development relates to them, are matters which all developments in this area need to consider (i.e. it is not simply something that is only restricted to that part of the site which is shown on the plan at Page 217). Policy 70, as a whole, therefore, needs not only to set out a framework which will to help secure the future of the headstocks, but also how they will be incorporated into development proposals in a way which maximises their potential for place-making in this new development.

18. That said, it has come to the Council’s attention that the Main Modification above has, in error, removed Policy 70 Part D4 and reference to ‘other uses, including leisure’ which did not form part of Historic England’s objection. The Council would therefore like to suggest a Main Modification (or at least a revised Main Modification to that set out in DMBC15 page 31) is necessary to retain the first part of D4 as per the Local Plan current policy wording i.e. ‘4. Other uses, including leisure.’

19. The Gypsy and Traveller site north of Station Road (known as ‘Whitegates’) was granted permission on 1983 with a condition limiting the site to 20 caravans. It also forms part of the supply identified in Table

### d) The relocation of existing gypsy and traveller sites from north of Station Road, Dunscroft to an appropriate site of similar size, proportion and equivalent standard as proposed in part E.
6 of the Local Plan (GT11 – Whitegates). The outline planning permission for Unity (Ref: 15/01300/OUTA) includes a condition (no. 42) stating that development on this part of the site cannot take place unless and until a replacement gypsy and traveller site of similar size and proportion has been provided and serviced.

20. The provision of 20 caravans is important to both the sites residents and the overall and continued supply of Gypsy and Traveller sites in the Borough. Given that the Council believe it is important the site is replaced, and the fact it is included as part of the list of sites in Policy 12, the Council feels it is justified in including this requirement as part of Policy 70.

Q11.1.A. Does policy 70, or associated reasoned justification, need to be modified to reflect the changes to the Use Classes Order that will come into effect on 1 September 2020?

21. As per the responses above, Policy 70 is primarily based on the Unity Outline planning consent, with some additional parts providing a basis for future development for the scheme not covered by the consent (e.g. the Hatfield Colliery site). Neither result in the need to refer to the Use Classes Order. The changes to the Use Classes Order are not therefore considered as having an impact on the policy as drafted, nor the explanatory text.

22. The Masterplan’s individual development plots/parcels, alongside the legend to Figure 17 on page 216 of the Local Plan (Unity Masterplan), and Table 16 on page 217 (Unity Indicative Area Schedule), all make reference to the Use Classes Order, including some which have now been deleted/replaced. For example, ‘B1’ (Offices) is now part of the new class ‘Eg’ (Commercial, Business & Service – offices, research and development, or light industrial), or ‘D1’ (Education) is now new class ‘F1’ (Local Community & Learning - learning & non-residential institutions).

23. The Masterplan (Figure 17) is taken from the Outline application and is not something that can be amended by the Council; that said it is not considered necessary as it reflects the planning approval as per the date of the consent. Likewise, Table 16 is a summary schedule of the development by type and area and is also taken from the application and supports Figure 17.