Draft Statement of Common Ground

Doncaster Local Plan

Peel L&P, Doncaster Sheffield Airport Limited & Doncaster Council

November 2020
# Contents

1. Introduction 3  
2. Strategic Policy 7  
3. Doncaster Local Plan 13  
4. Matters of Agreement 15  
5. Matters of non-agreement 17

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Signed: ……………………………………………………..  Dated: …3rd November 2020……………………………

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Signed: ………………………………………………..  Dated: …4th November 2020…………………

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Our reference  
PEEM3116  

3rd November 2020
1. **Introduction**

1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) is between Peel L&P, Doncaster Sheffield Airport Limited (DSAL) and Doncaster Council (hereafter referred to collectively as “the parties”) and relates to the examination of the Doncaster Local Plan. The SoCG has been developed jointly by the parties.

**Overview**

1.2 Doncaster Sheffield Airport (DSA) is located approximately 9km south east of Doncaster town centre and lies in close proximity to the settlements of Auckley – Hayfield Green. It is also closely related to Finningley to the east and Rossington to the west, which connects to DSA via the Great Yorkshire Way (GYW). The site is entirely within the administrative boundary of Doncaster Council.

1.3 Doncaster is located at the heart of the UK’s major motorway network, with connectivity to the A1, M1, M62 and Humber ports via the M18 and M180. DSA is directly connected to the M18 by the Great Yorkshire Way link road. The recent completion of GYW phase 2 has delivered a transformative improvement in access between the airport and the wider city region, resulting in an increased catchment of 5.53 million people.\(^1\)

**History of the Airport**

1.4 The Airport site has been in use for aviation purposes since 1915 when it was founded as Finningley Airfield. It was utilised throughout both the First and Second World Wars as an airbase and training facility and, post-war, as a base for numerous RAF Corps and training units.

1.5 RAF Finningley was decommissioned in 1996. It was then acquired by Peel and, following a successful planning application process, including a full Public Inquiry in 2000, it was converted and re-opened in 2005 as Robin Hood Airport Doncaster Sheffield when it began to operate commercially. So far Peel has invested in excess of £300m into the airport itself, surrounding landholdings and associated infrastructure.

1.6 The Airport is now named simply ‘Doncaster Sheffield Airport’ (DSA); it has become a major economic asset to both Doncaster, the Sheffield City Region (SCR) and beyond. It is recognised by Transport for the North\(^2\) (TfN) as one of a network of Regional Airports, which are crucial in providing the North of England with International Connectivity, which in turn is of fundamental importance to Northern Powerhouse objectives.

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\(^1\) Doncaster Sheffield Airport draft Masterplan 2018-2037, March 2018, page 18
\(^2\) Strategic Transport Plan, Transport for the North (2019)
The Airport Today

1.7 DSA is one of the fastest growing airports in the UK. It is a major employer currently supporting circa 1,000 jobs. In 2016/2017 the Airport enjoyed its biggest year on record for passengers and cargo: (i) with 1.23 million passengers; and (ii) 10,000 tonnes of cargo handled that year. This was surpassed in 2018/19 with 1.4 million passengers and 19,000 tonnes of cargo handled.

1.8 DSA has a specific set of characteristics which are unique and which collectively offer a significant opportunity for growth:

- The airport benefits from one of the longest runways (2.89km) outside the southeast. With this ready-made runway infrastructure, it has capacity for over 25 million passengers and 250,000 tonnes of cargo per annum. The runway has proven long-haul capability and can accommodate the world’s largest freighter and passenger aircraft. As such, DSA provides a solution to delivering airport capacity in the short and long term (see Section 4 for more detail).

- It sits at the heart of the UK motorway network, being close to five motorways - the M18, M1, A1 (M), M62 and M180 - allowing connections to all major UK cities. 75% of the UK population is within a 4.5 hour drive.

- DSA is located within a relatively low-density area and further development and aviation growth could be delivered without unacceptable impact on residential amenity, the surrounding environment and local communities.

- DSA can address the need for increased regional airport capacity, thereby reducing the significant number of car journeys made by people living within the region to airports elsewhere in the country. It can therefore be part of a strategy to reduce carbon emissions associated with air travel (see Section 4 for more detail).

- DSA is located outside of the Green Belt and outside of areas subject to flooding.

- The draft airport master plan highlights that DSA represents one of the few airports in the UK that has the capacity to enable large-scale air cargo growth without impacting the ability to deliver substantial passenger growth.

- Peel L&P owns significant land-holdings immediately adjoining the airport, which can facilitate the delivery of a major mixed use expansion and development which can be the catalyst for future economic growth in Doncaster and the Sheffield City Region.

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3 This figure will need to be verified when the Local Plan is adopted in order to provide the baseline number of jobs that the Airport must maintain in line with the mechanism in Policy 7

4 Draft Doncaster Sheffield Airport Masterplan – Executive Summary Document, March 2018

5 Draft Doncaster Sheffield Airport Masterplan – Executive Summary Document, March 2018
1.9 Given DSA’s unique position and attributes, the vision is for it to grow substantially into a major transport hub for passengers and freight for catchments east of the Pennines, north of London and up to the north east of England.

1.10 This vision is enshrined in the draft Airport Masterplan (referred to in the Local Plan as the Growth Plan). It sets out a vision to create an ‘aerotropolis’ and sustainable living and working community, on an enlarged scale which seeks to capitalise on the unique potential of DSA and fully reflects the high levels of ambition of the 2014 Sheffield City Region Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). The masterplan includes the following:

- A passenger operation of 4.7 million passengers by 2037 with potential for up to 7.2 million;
- A cargo operation handling 70,000 tonnes of air cargo by 2037, with potential for up to 176,500 tonnes of air cargo;
- Major terminal enhancements including doubling the size of the terminal with expanded check-in, security, departure and immigrations areas and new retail areas to enhance the customer experience;
- Up to 1.5 million sqft of airside development including expanded cargo operations, general business aviation facilities, multi-purpose hangars and a dedicated Maintenance and Repair Overhaul (MRO) campus incorporating a facility similar to the University of Sheffield Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) at Waverley between Sheffield and Rotherham;
- Residential development that could deliver 2-3,000 dwellings (The Local Plan supports up to 1,200 homes linked to the delivery of jobs during the plan period);
- Over 4 million sqft of landside logistics and advanced manufacturing space; and
- A new central plaza which is to become the fulcrum of the growing living and working community and which would accommodate food and non-food retail stores, hotels, restaurants, community, health and other commercial facilities.

1.11 A further element of the vision is a rail connection linking the site with both the nearby East Coast Mainline and the Lincoln to Doncaster line, with a dedicated rail station close to the passenger terminal and immediately adjacent to the proposed central plaza area. A new rail link and airport terminal station would place up to 9 million people in the area east of the Pennines and the north of London within 90 minutes rail journey of the DSA terminal. As well as fast journey times from the south, major population centres on the East Coast Mainline and otherwise north of Doncaster would be directly accessible to DSA, with York, Leeds and Newcastle being 25, 30 and 90 minutes away respectively. The rail proposition would also see full length rail freight sidings provided within the Airport Growth Plan area, located directly between proposed land-side advanced manufacturing/logistics space and future airside cargo transit sheds.
1.12 The level of growth proposed is forecast in the draft airport masterplan to result in over 10,000 direct jobs within the confines of the DSA Airport Growth Plan area and will result in the transformation of the economic landscape of Doncaster, the SCR and provide a major contribution to the Northern Powerhouse.

1.13 Moreover, in response to the Government consultation seeking views on the establishment of a number of Freeports across the country, Peel, SCR and Doncaster Council have made a joint response to Government, alongside the submission of a prospectus which sets out the nature and scale of opportunity for a major Freeport centred on DSA and iPort rail freight terminal, which is located at the far end of Great Yorkshire Way close to M18 J3. This consultation post-dates the submission of the Local Plan.

1.14 In July 2020, the opportunity presented around DSA and articulated through its Growth Plan was rebranded ‘GatewayEast’. The land this incorporates largely aligns with what the Local Plan now refers to as the ‘Airport Policy Area’.
2. Strategic Policy

National Policy

Aviation Policy Framework (2013) (APF)

2.1 The aviation framework sets out Government policy in terms of aviation, including the benefits of aviation and improved global connectivity and confirms its highly valued and valuable role within the economy. It also:

- Confirms that a short to medium term key priority is to work with the aviation industry and other stakeholders to make better use of existing runway capacity at all UK airports (Para 10 of the Executive Summary).

- Confirms that there is broad agreement that aviation benefits the UK economy at a national and regional level, and that responses to both the scoping document for and consultation on the APF demonstrated that these benefits are significant, particularly those arising from aviation connectivity. It also confirms the Government’s view that aviation brings social and cultural benefits (Para 1.3). Paragraphs 1.4 to 1.19 summarise the significant, extensive and diverse range of benefits brought by aviation, including in respect of imports/exports, manufacturing, skills and technology, greater productivity and growth, tourism, travel and culture.

- Supports the continued growth of UK airports outside the South East to ensure a balanced economy. It confirms that airports outside the South East are vital to their local and the national economy, with many growing and creating jobs. It references a number of airports growing in this manner, including Manchester Airport which is developing as a mixed use enterprise zone with the aim to deliver 5 million sqft of new business accommodation over the next 15 years. (page 21).

- Confirms that these regional airports have an important role in helping accommodate wider forecast growth in demand for aviation in the UK, which could help take some pressure off London’s main airports. It is explicit that the availability of direct air services locally from other airports can reduce the need for air passengers and freight to travel (or leak) long distances to reach larger UK airports (paragraph 1.23).

- Confirms that airports are in some ways cities in themselves, creating local jobs and fuelling opportunities for economic rebalancing in their wider region or area. It goes on to confirm that new or more frequent international connections attract business activity, boosting the economy of the region and providing new opportunities and better access to new markets for existing businesses (para 1.20).

- Recognises the very important role airports across the UK play in providing domestic and international connections and the vital contribution they can make to the growth of regional economies (para 1.21).
• Acknowledges that airports act as focal points for business development and employment by providing rapid delivery of products and convenient access to international markets, citing the fact that whilst Birmingham airport itself employs 500 people directly, 150 companies on the airport site employ a total of 7,000 people (para 1.22).

• Reiterates that a key priority is to make better use of existing runways at all UK airports to improve performance, capacity and resilience; encourages new routes in those UK airports outside the South East; and seeks to better integrate these airports into the wider transport network (para 1.60).

2.2 The Aviation Framework also encourages the production of airport master plans – the primary objective of master-plans is to provide a clear statement of intent on the part of an airport operator to enable future development of the airport to be given due consideration in local planning processes (para 4.11). The Government recommends that airports continue to produce master plans, updated at least once every five years and that they are widely consulted upon (para 4.12). The DSA master plan sets out a clear vision and intention of growth, including justification for each of its component parts of development and expansion. It also sets out a clear framework for expanding DSA whilst respecting the environment and protecting quality of life. It was widely consulted upon and resulted in c1,600 responses, with a level of support of over 90%.

Airports National Policy Statement 2018
2.3 The Airports National Policy Statement (NPS) adopts the position taken by the Airports Commission that the UK needs to make best use of existing runway infrastructure.

2.4 The NPS also reiterates and reinforces the economic importance of aviation (paragraphs 2.1 to 2.9) and recognises that international connectivity attracts businesses to cluster around airports, and that they help to improve the productivity of the wider UK economy (paragraph 2.2).

2.5 Other very recent Government policy and statements support the growth and development of airports such as DSA. This includes the very recent DfT publication “Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge” (March 2020) which sets out Government thinking in developing an ambitious plan to accelerate the decarbonisation of transport. This document expressly acknowledges that airport expansion is still a core part of boosting the nation’s global connectivity and levelling up across the UK (paragraph 2.49).

National Infrastructure Delivery Plan
2.6 The National Infrastructure Delivery Plan states that:

“...airports and ports are the gateways providing the international connections the UK needs to grow and prosper. They facilitate the movement of goods, people and ideas around the world, to support trade and investment and allow knowledge and innovation to be shared. They also provide social benefits, enabling UK citizens to visit family and friends overseas, experience different cultures or simply enjoy a well-earned holiday...” (paragraph 5.2).
2.7 It also recognises that smaller airports are vital for local economies and they open up opportunities for global connections (paragraph 5.11).

**National Planning Policy Framework**

2.8 The NPPF seeks to deliver sustainable development and seeks to ensure that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way. It seeks:

- to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure (paragraph 8(a));

- to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being (paragraph 8(b));

- to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy (paragraph 8(c));

- policies which support an appropriate mix of uses across an area, and within larger scale sites, to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities (paragraph 104(a));

- policies which provide for any large-scale transport facilities (which includes airports) that need to be located in the area, and the infrastructure and wider development required to support their operation, expansion and contribution to the wider economy. In doing so they should take into account whether such development is likely to be a nationally significant infrastructure project and any relevant national policy statements (paragraph 104(e));

**Independent International Connectivity Commission Report (IICCR)**

2.9 This report, produced by the Commission for Transport for the North (TfN), supports the benefits associated with airports and seaports, given airports can use land around their core facilities to support the attraction of other business activities, which value the proximity to an airport or seek to benefit from the high quality surface access links. It states that:

> “By acting as regional growth magnets, airports can use land around their core facilities to support the attraction of other activities which value proximity to an airport or seek to benefit from the high quality surface access links”.

Turley
Regional Economic Policy

2.10 There are a number of recent key economic strategies and reports which outline the importance of growth at and surrounding Doncaster Sheffield Airport and within the wider Sheffield City Region.

Sheffield City Region Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan (2014)

2.11 The Sheffield City Region (SCR) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) sets an ambitious target to increase GVA within the City Region by £3.1bn by 2025. Achieving this ambition will strengthen SCR’s contribution to the national economy and its role within the Northern Powerhouse. It targets 70,000 net additional jobs within SCR and it identifies seven long term spatial areas of growth and change where a significant proportion of growth is expected to occur.

2.12 One of the seven SCR areas of growth and change is the Doncaster Sheffield Airport corridor, which is:

“Recognised as a catalyst for business development, inward investment and job creation with regard to logistics, engineering and associated aviation activities.”

2.13 It is important that the Local Plan fully aligns with the objectives of the SEP.

SCR Integrated Infrastructure Plan

2.14 To support the SCR SEP, an Integrated Infrastructure Plan (IIP) was published in 2016. The IIP articulates and evidences required infrastructure and spatial requirements linked to supporting the economic priority areas identified in the SEP. In essence, it seeks to provide the infrastructure necessary to create the best opportunities for economic growth, jobs and homes, to create the best and most attractive environments for businesses and residents. To focus investment, the IIP identifies a number of strategic spatial priorities:

- Growth of the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District;
- Provide growth and enhance the role of DSA and the surrounding area;
- Maximise the benefits of HS2 in the Sheffield City Region; and
- Stimulate growth and regeneration in Town and City Centres.

2.15 DSA is expressly identified as a Growth Area which is currently being developed as an engineering and aero-industry centre “alongside and including” housing growth. The IIP encourages Spatial Frameworks to be prepared to identify strategic areas of future housing delivery aligned with the ambitions of the Growth Areas and Urban Centres – this should include strategic opportunities for housing as an integrated element of Growth Areas.

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6 AE17
7 AE18.1-2
Update of the SCR Strategic Economic Plan

2.16 The SCR is in the process of producing a new SEP.

2.17 In addition to the new draft SEP, to support and foster growth at DSA aligned with the airport master plan, SCR and Peel L&P/DSA have produced a draft Economic Blueprint⁸ to set out how the parties will work together to realise the economic opportunity of the GatewayEast growth cluster. This document has been presented to and approved by both the Board of the SCR Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Mayoral Combined Authority Infrastructure Board as part of the formal MCA governance framework.

2.18 The report to the LEP Board reaffirmed that the LEP and MCA of the SCR recognise the strategic importance of DSA to the future economic and social growth of the region, and that this is captured in the emerging SEP which continues to identify the airport and the surrounding GatewayEast site as a key growth area. The core ambition is set for GatewayEast to develop as an innovation-led growth cluster.

Summary

2.19 National aviation policy is clear in providing encouragement for airports outside of the South East of England to grow, both in terms of passenger and cargo growth but also as wider economic clusters and drivers for growth.

2.20 It is also a key priority of national policy to make better use of existing runway capacity at all UK airports.

2.21 It is also explicit that the availability of direct air services locally can reduce the need for air passengers and freight to travel (or leak) long distances to reach larger UK airports.

2.22 The NPPF clearly sets out a requirement that policies should provide for any large-scale transport facilities (which includes airports) that need to be located in the area, and the infrastructure and wider development required to support their operation, expansion and contribution to the wider economy.

2.23 Strategic regional economic policy identifies the importance of strengthening the role of DSA and connections to it as well as supporting the cluster and agglomeration benefits from specialist aviation sectors as one area in which the City Region can capture new opportunities. It also emphasises the importance of capitalising upon the opportunity presented by the airport by providing rail connectivity.

2.24 The success and growth of DSA and GatewayEast is crucial in:

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⁸ GatewayEast Economic Blueprint, Sheffield City Region, July 2020 -
• providing opportunities to make better use of under-used runway capacity and reduce the need for residents of Doncaster and SCR and freight moving by air into or out of the region, to travel to more distant airports;

• delivering a number of objectives of the SCR SEP which seeks to encourage the development of the airport and GatewayEast as an economic cluster to improve the local and regional economy.
3. Doncaster Local Plan

3.1 The Doncaster Local Plan (DLP) was submitted for Examination on 4th March 2020. In relation to DSA, the DLP identifies the following:

- One of the key proposals of the DLP is to support the sustainable growth of Doncaster Sheffield Airport;
- Developing DSA and the aviation sector is seen as an economic opportunity;
- DSA is enshrined within the DLP vision expecting that by 2035, Doncaster will harness the potential of the airport, including linking to regional growth corridors and securing support for a rail link between the airport and the East Coast Main Line;
- To help achieve this vision and inform the Local Plan’s policies, a series of objectives have been developed. The first objective is “Supporting the conditions for attracting jobs and growth” with the next sub-objective being “the encouragement and support a competitive diverse and stable economy focusing on our town and district centres, Doncaster Sheffield Airport growth corridor and strategic transport network.”

3.2 A single, embracing policy on DSA is one of the strategic policies of the DLP (Strategic Policy 7, SP7). The policy and its accompanying text support the growth and expansion of the airport, identifying it as a gateway to the region which will play a key role in driving the local and regional economy forward. Along with other assets such as i-Port and the former Rossington colliery, DSA forms part of a significant growth corridor in the east of the Borough.

3.3 The policy also recognises the transformational effect of the delivery of the DSA Growth Plan and to ensure DSA grows and delivers sustainable growth, the policy sets out the following main provisions:

- It identifies the spatial extent of DSA, as defined on the Policies Map to which the policy applies (termed “Airport Policy Area”).
- It supports the DSA Growth Plan main component land-use parts, including specific allocations being identified for both land-side and air-side development as well as general policy about acceptable uses within the Airport Policy Area and access strategy.
- It supports the creation of a mixed use area with existing development (within the Airport Policy Area) and Auckley – Hayfield Green being supplemented by

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9 Document Summary, Doncaster Local Plan, Publication Version, June 2019
10 SWOT assessment, table 1, page 11, Doncaster Local Plan, Publication Version, June 2019
13 Doncaster Local Plan, Publication Version, paragraph 5.2, page 47, June 2019
further employment and residential land-use allocations as well as a central plaza to accommodate retail, restaurants, leisure, hotels, offices and community facilities.

- It specifically supports an initial allocation of 280 dwellings with further residential development being supported upon the evidenced delivery of jobs created within the Airport Policy Area. The policy is supported by an Appendix to the LP (Appendix 3) which provides a practical illustration of the policy mechanism which facilitates this link with jobs growth.

- In order to achieve sustainable development, the policy requires the submission and approval of various details including master planning for the plaza and residential element of the proposals, support in new infrastructure delivery, and a Green Infrastructure Strategy.
4. Matters of Agreement

4.1 The parties agree as follows:

- DSA is a unique local and regionally significant asset and an economic priority. It is a key objective of the LP for the economic growth ambitions at DSA to be realised.

- The proposed growth and expansion of DSA is fully supported by national aviation policy, national planning policy and strategic economic policy.

- Without an improved aviation offer in the region, such as that presented at DSA, there will continue to be a ‘leakage’ of passengers to other airports such as Manchester, East Midlands and London airports.

- The Airport Policy Area is not in Green Belt or an area at risk of flooding.

- The completion of the circa £70m Great Yorkshire Way has significantly improved direct accessibility to the airport from the M18 and Doncaster town centre. It has also increased the development potential and deliverability of GatewayEast.

- Where identified, potential adverse impacts associated with the development and the growth of the airport and within the Airport Policy Area will be suitably mitigated.

- The Airport Policy Area is a suitable location for economic growth, housing (subject to the delivery of jobs) and town centre uses which in turn through the ways set out in Policy 7, can drive a sustainable mixed use development in this location.

- The airport and adjacent land identified for development is owned by Peel and is to a large extent comprised of open land. It is available for development and is not subject to any legal or ownership constraints, such as ransom strips, which might present an obstacle to early delivery.

- There are no identified infrastructure constraints within the Airport Policy Area, such as in respect of highways, drainage, or social infrastructure, which cannot be viably addressed by the proposed development, for example through the use of planning obligations or conditions associated with any future planning permission. Policy 7 and the Local Plan developer requirements identify matters to be addressed.

- Growth and expansion at DSA needs to be realised through sustainable and carefully planned holistic growth which Strategic Policy seeks to deliver.

- The specific allocations identified in Strategic Policy 7 align with the draft airport masterplan and its ambitions, with the exception of those matters which are identified in Section 5 of this SoCG.
• The employment allocations 517, 748 and 941 is envisaged to be fully developed within the plan period. These and the wider Airport Policy Area forms an attractive location for development due to the proximity to the airport, excellent transport connectivity and the opportunity to locate close to other development including iPort and the advanced manufacturing park.

• The mechanism proposed by Criterion F (now G) of Policy 7 would facilitate the support of further housing release within site 940 E3 upon evidenced job delivery, except where specifically cited in Section 5 of the SoCG.

• The allocation for 280 dwellings as a first phase on site 940 E2 is supported. This is the only time houses will come forward ahead of job delivery and is provided in lieu, with the associated jobs having to be factored in to future housing release calculations, as set out in Policy 7 and Appendix 3. This up-front housing helps ensure the mix of uses is present from the outset, ensuring the prompt availability of residential elements and housing availability to provide a real encouragement for initial employees on adjacent employment sites or of the airport, to live close to their workplace as clearly supported by the NPPF. Alongside employment and airport operational growth, it supports the viability of the commercial and retail elements on the central plaza (site 940 E1). It increases the attractiveness of the overall proposal here and provides confidence (alongside the wider envisaged development) to investors that this is a desirable location to situate themselves and their business, with local labour supply.
5. Matters of non-agreement

5.1 The following matters are not agreed by the parties:

- The base date for the policy mechanism. Peel / DSAL believe that this should be 2018 to reflect the draft airport masterplan and capture jobs growth in the interim period, whereas the Council believe this should remain as drafted within Policy 7 – from 2020 or the point at which the Local Plan is adopted.

- Part (J)(2) of the policy which states that improved access to the M18 from the airport site will be supported. Peel/DSA consider the policy lacks precision as to the specific nature of these proposals. The Council has confirmed that this refers to a potential new link road from Junction 4 linking the M18 directly with the A614. Peel / DSAL consider a modification to the policy and table are required to provide clarity.

- Peel / DSAL believe that in the event of a failure to demonstrate a five year supply of housing, the Council should sequentially prioritise the release of residential land at the airport to address shortfalls. The Council believe they are not required to plan in this manner and that allowing for this would be contrary to the aims of Policy 7 and the requirement for job delivery to justify housing release. The Council responded to this point at the hearings for Matter 5.