DONCASTER LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

Matter 3 – Spatial Strategy

In respect of

Inland Port, (iPort), Rossington

on behalf of

Troy Verdion
Representor ID: 05177
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement seeks to address the Inspector’s questions that relate to the representations made previously by RPS on behalf of Troy Verdion to the Regulation 19 Pre-submission Local Plan, in relation to the Inland Port site in Rossington, known as iPort.

1.2 The Inland Port benefits from outline planning permission (LPA ref: 09/00190/OUTA) for a rail freight terminal served by rail and road, 562,000m² of warehouses and over 100 hectares of ecological enhancements. Verdion commenced construction in 2015 and to date eight major buildings have been built together with the rail terminal that has been operational since September 2018. The site access roads, drainage infrastructure and building plateaux for the remaining proposed buildings have all been constructed.

1.3 iPort is a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) which is a large multi-purpose rail freight interchange and distribution centre linked into both a rail and trunk road system. It is connected to the rail network via the line of the former South Yorkshire Joint Railway.

1.4 The implementation of the SRFI at iPort enables the diversion of freight from road to rail and plays a vital role in achieving the Government’s commitment to sustainable development. The transfer of freight from road to rail has a vital role to play in a low carbon economy and helps to address climate change thus contributing to the Government’s economic, strategic and environmental objective’s.

1.5 This statement specifically responds to the following matters and issues raised by the Inspector set out in the Schedule of Matters, Issues and Question for the Examination (Inspector’s Note 4, 11th June 2020). These are

Spatial Strategy

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

\textbf{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

1.6 Our response to the above issue and matter is set out in the following section.
2  MATTER 3: STRATEGIC APPROACH

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

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

2.1 iPort is a major multi-modal transport hub and includes warehousing and ancillary floorspace. It is located between the M18 motorway and Doncaster Sheffield Airport and provides freight services to all UK ports and the Chanel Tunnel. The implementation of the SRFI at iPort, Rossington, has strengthened Doncaster’s role as a logistics centre of national significance and plays a key role in promoting the sustainable distribution of goods. Doncaster is keen to support its role as a logistic hub and the Council recognise that the scheme has major regeneration benefits which extend across the whole borough.

2.2 The broad spatial distribution of employment development proposed within policies 2 and 3 of the plan are not fully justified and do not take into account of the employment land currently available at iPort and thus we consider them to be unsound at present. As set out within our representations in relation to matter 2, we consider there to be an oversupply of employment land, which is not sustainable.

2.3 The prime benefit of the SRFI is the modal shift of freight traffic from road to rail resulting in a significant reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, together with reduced traffic levels and congestion on the primary highway network.

2.4 We believe that the Council have failed to acknowledge this benefit during their site selection process as the over allocation of land for strategic warehousing could have a significant impact on the successful completion of the iPort scheme, which should be a priority given the substantial sustainability and regeneration benefits. Para 108 (a) of the NPPF states that in assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location.

2.5 Giving priority to location of strategic warehousing at the iPort site, would continue the approach in the current adopted Doncaster Core Strategy 2011-2028, where Policy CSS5(B) states: “In releasing new land for strategic warehousing, priority will be given to the proposed Strategic Rail Freight Interchange at Rossington which will be served by rail freight and will operate as an intermodal terminal”

2.6 The approach to delivering sustainable development is to bring forward sufficient land of a suitable quality in appropriate locations to meet expected needs for industrial, commercial and other development taking account issues such as accessibility and other transport issues. Therefore, the premature release of additional road-based sites should be resisted.

2.7 The Local Plan should contain a section which invokes a scheme of phasing. Sites should be released gradually, in order to meet demand, avoiding excess supply of employment land. There are 51.88 hectares of land remaining at iPort and we believe that the Council should ensure development is directed towards existing logistics and warehousing centres, instead of allocating new sites for employment development.

2.8 Within Policy 7: “Doncaster Sheffield Airport and Business Park”, it is stated that phasing will be utilised in order to regulate the development of a mixed-use urban extension on land to the southwest of Hayfield Green:

“The release of housing on this site will be phased and strictly tied to the robustly evidenced delivery of jobs in line with the airport growth plan”.

Para 108 (a) of the NPPF states that in assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location.”
2.9 Verdion urge DMBC to take the same approach towards the Borough’s employment allocations. Echoing paragraph 5.15 of the Local Plan, DMBC must ensure economic growth is achieved in a considered and balanced manner, in order that any growth is delivered in a sustainable way, and with potential negative impacts suitably mitigated. To comply with current NPPF guidance on promoting sustainable development, priority should continue to be given to land at iPort for developing strategic warehousing.
3 CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Overall Verdion support the ambitions of Doncaster to become a “more important economic hub with a stronger, more balanced and productive economy”, however this balance can only be achieved through a deliverable and sustainable plan that allocates employment land appropriately and deliver it in a phased manner.

3.2 The broad spatial distribution of employment development proposed within policies 2 and 3 of the plan are not fully justified and do not take into account of the employment land currently available at iP0rt and thus we consider them to be unsound at present. As set out within our representations in relation to matter 2, we consider there to be an oversupply of employment land, which is not sustainable.

3.3 We consider that the Local Plan can be made sound through providing a mechanism for phasing the release of further land for strategic warehousing to give priority to rail-served sites in line with national policy. This would be achieved through the suggested changes to the wording of Policy 3 Level and Distribution of Growth as set out below (additional wording in bold):

“At least 481 hectares of employment land over the plan period (2015-2035) to help grow and diversify the Sheffield City Region economy, increase productivity and widen access to learning and training opportunities. The identified land will accommodate business, light industry, and manufacturing and distribution and warehouse uses to meet future employment needs on sites that are attractive to market investment and can be accessed via a range of transport modes. A number of sites are allocated which help meet the regeneration needs of the Borough. In releasing new land for strategic warehousing, priority will be given to sites at the Strategic Railfreight Interchange at Rossington”

Following adoption of the Local Plan, the council will continue to monitor the potential phasing of sites through the Employment Land Needs Assessment (ELNA). Sites will be assessed through the ELNA to assess their suitability, availability and achievability to examine whether circumstances have changed and whether they are still deliverable and developable.