



Acres Land & Planning Ltd

'Acres of space'

Client: The Goodall Family
Matter 2 The Spatial Strategy

FURTHER SUBMISSION ON MATTER 2 THE SPATIAL STRATEGY.

DERBYSHIRE DALES LOCAL PLAN: EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

Introduction.

Acres Land & Planning Ltd (ALPS) have submitted representations on behalf of the Goodall Family in support of their land at Brailsford which is proposed for future housing development. This further submission summarises the key points raised by ALPS in our cases and addresses the points raised by the inspector in his Question & Answer paper.

Issues

Issue 1. The position of settlements in the hierarchy.

Is the position of settlements in the hierarchy within Policy S3 justified having particular regard to accessibility to services and employment?

Broadly speaking we are happy with the approach taken towards distributing development within the District. It is logical to focus most development in larger settlements and market towns and those with a larger range of services whereby the impact of change can be safely absorbed. We are therefore content with the hierarchy approach adopted by Derbyshire Dales and the broad distribution of settlements within the hierarchy. For example, it is sensible to treat Ashbourne, Matlock and Wirksworth as Tier 1 settlements – albeit Wirksworth must be considered as 'marginal' in terms of its Tier 1 status since it has a much lower level of services than both Ashbourne and Matlock and is arguably too close to Matlock to be regarded as a separate Tier 1 settlement.

In our representations to the Plan we have argued however we don't see the logic of separating out Darley Dale into a separate Second Tier level in the hierarchy – although we notice that it has lost its **bold** title in the text. Darley Dale could sensibly be included within the larger villages, which then together could form a new Tier 2.

We welcome the inclusion of **Brailsford** in the Larger Villages (Tier 3) category – although we don't particularly favour the term '*Accessible Settlements with Limited Facilities*' which seems clumsily worded and insufficiently distinct from the fourth tier '*Accessible Villages with Minimal Facilities*'. However, it is important to reflect that in a District which has relatively few larger villages (such as Brailsford and Doveridge) which are accessible and close to main urban settlements, there really ought to be a different emphasis towards development in those settlements and hence potentially a 'Super Tier 3' category.

Issue 2. Levels of growth within the settlement hierarchy. Should similar proportionate levels of growth be identified for each settlement within a particular tier of the hierarchy?

The Local Plan (Policy S3) is not explicit about the level of growth which is appropriate in the different Tiers. It is implicit that more growth will occur in Matlock, than in smaller lower tier settlements. The text relating to **Tier 3** simply says '*They will provide for reduced level of development in comparison to higher order settlements in order to safeguard their role consistent with maintaining or enhancing key environmental attributes*'. So the scale of development is unclear and, perhaps predictably in the Derbyshire Dales, is related to environmental capacity assumptions (without any environmental capacity evidence actually being produced) rather than related to housing needs or proximity to services and facilities.

This raises the question: Should the level of development in each Tier be more specific? There are clearly advantages of providing a range to give more clarity and certainty, but on the other hand a guidance figure may be seen as a ceiling rather than a floor – leading to arbitrary limits which stifle change. On balance, since different settlements have different levels of need (and capacity) we feel that any specific guidance figure would probably be unhelpful. For example, there must be some recognition of the accessibility of settlements (and their linkages to other towns and cities possibly outside the District).

Brailsford for example, is the only settlement within Derbyshire Dales which previously fell within the Derbyshire Structure Plan (Derby Housing Market Area). It lies on the A52 and only 10 miles (or 20 minutes' drive) from Derby with its huge range of administrative, cultural and retail services and facilities. It has its own range of facilities, including a brand new primary school (funded by new development) several shops, two cafes and a large health centre. It also has a regular hourly bus service between Derby and Ashbourne.

In view of its good accessibility and the ease with which people in Brailsford can travel to work in Derby, it is entirely appropriate that Brailsford should be a target for more growth. This should therefore be acknowledged within the Local Plan and reflected in the number of homes which are allocated to the village. Understandably, despite already having a significant amount of family housing, there is a vocal resistance to new development from the Parish Council and this has been instrumental in restraining the level of growth in the recent past. We take the view that it is not so much the **quantity** of development which is important in terms of the impact on communities, but the **quality** of development. In other words, if housing is properly master-planned and well-designed it can provide a positive contribution to a village community, both in terms of meeting peoples' needs and delivering new or improved services.

Furthermore, it needs to be emphasised that Tier 3 settlements do not just contain opportunities for development but also legitimate needs for development and that new development serves a valuable purpose in helping to boost the wider economy as well as bringing spending power back into the Dales.

We do however welcome the change to potentially allow development outside the boundaries of infill and Consolidation Villages (outlined in paragraph 4.21). This has not been reflected in the policy wording in S3, which should therefore be up-dated.

Issue 3. The requirements of Policy S3 in terms of where development can take place.

Is the approach of only having settlement boundaries for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd tier settlements appropriate? Does Policy S3 provide a sufficiently clear and positive framework for dealing with proposals for development related to the 4th and 5th tier settlements and other rural areas?

We feel it is probably appropriate to only have settlement boundaries for Tier 1, 2 and 3 settlements. Larger settlements are likely to become the main focus for growth and therefore it is helpful to know (as a resident, developer or local authority) where specifically development is likely to go. The boundary will not necessarily be fixed for all time, indeed if the Local Plan becomes out of date, by virtue of a lack of housing supply, then development boundaries may be breached.

Smaller settlements are less well defined and hence the problem of drawing settlement boundaries is much greater. It is also a very time consuming exercise where there are so many Tier 4 and 5 settlements. In circumstances in other Plans where smaller settlements are defined by boundaries, they tend to be inflexible and very tightly drawn. A criteria-based approach is therefore more appropriate, allowing development where and when it can be genuinely justified.

However, there are contradictions within the wording of Policy S3 and the background text which we raised in our representations. The wording of the reasoned justification to policy S3 potentially allows development outside the boundaries of infill and Consolidation Villages (outlined in paragraph 4.21), but this has not been reflected in the policy wording in S3, which should therefore be up-dated.

Issue 4. The Garden Village Option.

Are the reasons for rejecting the Garden Village option justified?

The concept of building new towns and garden villages are an imaginative way of addressing housing needs, whilst engaging in genuine positive planning. But Garden Villages are likely to have relatively long-lead-in times and the Government has specified that they need to be 'locally led' and ideally on previously used land, with good transport links and close to market towns so that people have access to higher order services

Part 3.4 of the Sustainability Appraisal addresses the issue in some detail and compares the proposal against the criteria within the Government's document 'Locally-led garden village, town and city proposals'. We understand that the proposal for a Garden Village emerged in February 2015 as a theoretical alternative to locating housing development at other sites locally. We are not aware that there has been a specific deliverable proposal for a New Garden Village within the Local Plan and we note that a relatively large number of respondents have offered their support for the concept – in principle.

But in practice, experience suggests that once a specific tangible proposal comes forward there is often much less support (and many objections), therefore until a firm proposal is

promoted it is probably unhelpful to discuss the theory of new garden villages within the Derbyshire Dales – let alone abandoning housing allocations in the hope that a garden village may come forward. There are likely to be many potential sites for a Garden Village and there are probably suitable locations within the Derbyshire Dales which would fulfil the Government criteria. However, it would be premature to debate these possible sites in any detail at the EIP since the purpose of the Inquiry is to test the soundness of the Local Plan.

Although the SA is expected to consider all reasonable alternatives in the consideration of the Plan, we would argue that the Local Plan cannot be regarded as unsound by virtue of not identifying a new Garden Village.

Issue 5. The generic strategic policies S2, S4 and S5.

Are these policies positively prepared, effective and consistent with national policy taking into account any proposed modifications?

Policy S2: Sustainable Development Principles. Whilst we have not objected to Policy S2 since we broadly support the concept that *'All developments should seek to ensure that they make a positive contribution towards the achievement of sustainable development by improving the economic, environmental and social conditions of the area'*, we are concerned about the long list of 18 criteria which appear designed to frustrate rather than promote development. It seems unlikely that any housing development could surmount all the hurdles and hence what may have been intended as a 'positive' policy will become a negative constraint.

Policy S4: Development within Defined Settlement Boundaries: Our representations welcome the change to Policy S4 for the settlement boundary to reflect the new proposed allocations within the plan. However, the list of 8 'bullet points' a) to g) again appear to set a series of idealistic but potentially insurmountable hurdles which few proposals could meet and to some extent repeat the in criteria a) to g).

A further 3 criteria a) to c) restrict opportunities for development still further. Criterion b) refers to housing to meet 'local needs' which is at odds with the wider objectives of the Government in requiring Local Plans to cater for objectively assessed housing needs, not just local needs. We have suggested that this policy needs to be simplified and the criteria incorporated into a single list.

Policy S5: Development in the Countryside: Our representations object to this policy because although the policy refers to locations which are outside defined settlement boundaries. There seems to be no provision for the modest small scale development one would expect within or outside the smaller lower tier villages, including development which paragraph 4.21 proposes should be allowed on the edge of Infill and Consolidation Villages (5th tier).

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