

Matter 2/107

**North West Leicestershire District Council
Local Plan Examination**

Statement on Behalf of

Mosaic Estates (respondent ref. 107)

Day 1

(Thursday 5th January 2017 – 2 p.m.)

Matter 2

The Vision, Objectives and Spatial Strategy



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b. Is the Spatial Strategy of the Plan justified and effective, in particular with respect to:

i. reasonable alternatives [LP04-05]

ii. the chosen settlement hierarchy:

1. within the District

2. having regard to the proximity of towns in neighbouring Districts [BP/02]

iii. the definition of the scale and Limits of Development:

1. Coalville

2. village settlements

iv. the overall distribution of development, in particular between Coalville and Ashby de la Zouch

v. the re-use of previously developed (brownfield) land

vi. sustainable patterns of transport?

The North West Leicestershire Local Plan ('the Plan') is not justified and effective as it has failed to fully examine the opportunities for the reuse of sustainably located previously developed land and as such, it does not have due regard to nor is it compliant with national policy.

It is recognised that the Plan Examination is progressing in the context of some doubt over future housing and employment needs. This context of uncertainty is to be dealt with through a trigger mechanism for early review of the plan in the event that growth fails to take place at a pace that accords with the plan trajectory, or if assessment of future economic growth needs reveal a requirement for additional housing and / or employment land.

Within such a context it is important that the Plan overall establishes an appropriate framework for accommodating both identified growth needs, but also any additional growth, alongside, or above the Plan provision. We note that the Local Plan housing growth requirements are a minimum requirement not a ceiling.

The Framework identifies as one of its 12 principles, '*the need to encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value;*'

The government has recently pledged 1 million more homes and to get planning permission in place on 90% of suitable brownfield sites for housing. It could not be more direct regarding its intention and preference to see more development take place on brownfield land, and this emphasis is a fundamental plank of planning policy. As such, it is not something that can be paid lip service to within the Local Plan, but needs to be a significant driver of the spatial strategy, alongside the emphasis on sustainable settlements.

It is not enough to identify sufficient housing sites to meet minimum housing need requirements, the Framework requires the Local Plan to 'encourage' the effective use

of previously developed land. The Local Plan fails to do so and as such it is not effective, justified or consistent with the fundamental principles of the Framework

Where, as in the case of Heather and Ibstock, there are sustainably located, deliverable, sizeable brownfield sites on the edge of the defined settlement boundary, their potential to contribute to meeting growth needs should not be written off under 'countryside' protection policies

We have in our previous submissions to the plan made reference to the site of the former Heather Brickworks, located to the south of Mill Lane, Heather. The Local Plan fails to fully recognise or support the development potential of that site, a brownfield site that offers a regeneration opportunity in a sustainable location.

The former Brickworks site, though historically associated with Heather, not least by its name, is also closely related to Ibstock. Both settlements are identified by the Plan as sustainable locations, being identified within the settlement hierarchy (see further comments below) and therefore suitable locations for new development.

Production work and related employment at the brickworks has now ceased. The site has been cleared. There is no realistic prospect of new employment uses being established on the site. The cessation of site operations has left behind a substantial brownfield site of approximately 4.6 hectares.

Heather is categorised by the Council as a 'Sustainable Village', the fourth tier of six in the defined settlement hierarchy. Heather lends itself well to this categorisation providing a good range of local facilities including a primary school, local convenience store, church, public house and a recreation ground, in addition to small scale employment opportunities. The day-to-day needs of many of Heather's residents can therefore be met without the need to travel outside of the settlement. The identification of Ibstock as a 'Local Service Centre' (tier three) is appropriate by virtue of its size and increased offer of services.

Whilst the supporting text provides a robust justification for Policy S2 and the hierarchy of settlements is considered to be broadly in accordance with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), we do not agree with the levels of growth that may then be supported at or around the different settlements, based on this hierarchy. The Council's settlement hierarchy assesses 'Sustainable Villages' as having a limited range of services and facilities where a limited amount of growth will take place within the defined Limits to Development. As drafted, this Policy would therefore not seek to identify nor support development opportunities that fall just outside of the settlement boundary, even if such a site had a close relationship with the settlement. It serves to negate otherwise suitable opportunities for redevelopment of previously developed (brownfield) sites, contrary to the principles of the NPPF.

Amendments to this policy are therefore required to ensure it has full and proper regard to such opportunities, maximising the prospects for the sustainable growth of 'Sustainable Villages'.

Policy S3 (Countryside)

Policy S3 seeks to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife and its natural resources. However, the policy does not exclusively address typical countryside locations rather, as drafted, it presents a moratorium on all development outside of the defined development limits of settlements.

The inflexibility of the policy would mean that it would be incapable of recognising and responding to the diversity of character that together constitutes the 'countryside' within the District. It should rather recognise that outside of the tightly defined Limits of Development, many areas are transitional in character and host to sustainable locations for development.

The Local Plan's Settlement Hierarchy expressly supports the redevelopment of brownfield sites within 'Small Villages'. This support is repeated within Policy S3. To that end, it is consistent with national policy and guidance which states that, where possible, new development should be directed towards previously developed land. The policy does not however provide support for the redevelopment of brownfield sites that, though located outside of the strictly defined settlement boundaries, have a close physical and / or functional relationship with nearby settlements, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development espoused by the Plan and national policy and guidance.

Paragraph 17 of the NPPF sets out the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play and the principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking, including *'encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value'*.

Paragraph 111 of the NPPF reiterates this position and in addition, states that local planning authorities may consider setting locally appropriate targets for the use of brownfield land.

We are of the view that Policy S3 should include express support for the identification and redevelopment of previously developed land for housing where it is located within, adjacent or has a close functional relationship with Sustainable Villages, even if such land is outside of the currently defined Limits of Development. Such amendments would help to ensure the policy was 'sound'.