

EXAMINATION OF NWLDC LOCAL PLAN

POSITION STATEMENT by ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH CIVIC SOCIETY
RESPONDENTS NO. 110 & 111

1. LEGAL COMPLIANCE AND FUTURE PLAN REVIEW

(a) iii Sustainability appraisal

Four key objectives of the plan are to:

Regenerate Coalville,

Balance housing with employment,

Reduce the need to travel

Enhance the natural environment.

The option to substantially increase the size of Ashby de la Zouch is contrary to these objectives.

Transfer of housing from Coalville to Ashby negatively impacts regeneration.

Housing will be in Ashby with employment in Coalville and Castle Donington

Ashby be a commuter town.

The River Mease water quality will worsen.

Ashby was chosen to receive increased housing on the basis that:

Ashby has not seen so much growth as Coalville in recent year.

Coalville has seen a large number of commitments

Ashby growth has less impact on the environment.

Employment site at Moneyhill is co located with housing.

Ashby can provide more affordable housing.

However facts show that:

Ashby has grown from 11% of the total dwelling in the district in 1991 to 13% in 2001 and projected 16% in 2031. Meanwhile Coalville has shrunk due to lack of building.

Coalville has seen commitments below its relative size and there are questions on the deliverability and viability of the sites.

The growth of Ashby has a very serious negative impact on the River Mease SAC.

The proposed employment site on Moneyhill is the defined as the least sustainable site in the district

Ashby can provide more affordable housing but it is at least 30% more expensive than Coalville. So the option is good for Ashby residents but not for the most deprived residents who are located in Coalville.

The Regional plan restricted housing development in Ashby to 750 houses due to sustainability issues. The withdrawn core strategy was constrained to 1400 houses. This plan suggests 2700 houses. No mitigation is in place or planned to cope with this massive increase in housing numbers and is thus unsustainable.

(a) iv Habitats Regulation

The impact on the River Mease SAC is the key issue. Housing built in the catchment of the Mease will impact the water quality due to discharge from sewerage works. The key contributors are housing in Ashby and Measham. NWLDC imposed a moratorium on building in the catchment for several years due to the negative impact of STWs on the unfavourable condition of the River Mease. This was lifted with the introduction of the Developer Contribution Scheme, which meant that no Habitats assessments were needed to be undertaken as the scheme guaranteed nil detriment to the river condition. DCS 1 scheme mitigations have not been delivered and the river Condition has deteriorated. DCS 2 has now recently been approved further extending the authority to build more houses in the catchment. Within the DCS2 is an acceptance that the mitigation solutions suggested are non-sustainable and that diversion of sewerage away from the Mease is the long-term solution. This solution needs to be provided by Severn Trent both physically and financially. A target date of 2025 is estimated for completion of this work but this is likely to slip particularly as HS2 will cause the demolition of the Packington Sewerage works.

We content that the DCs schemes are unsound and therefore are not compliant with the Habitats Regulations.

(b) Is the plan and its preparation compliant with the statutory duty to cooperate?

A memorandum of understanding was signed by all Leicestershire councils based on a joint SHMA evidence. This required NWLDC to supply a minimum of 5700 houses. The council decided to provide the upper limit of 7000 to account for high economic demand in the district. In September 2015 this was increased to 10700 to take into account the housing requirement from the SFRI. The council has now approved and allocated 13,000 houses. None of these adjustments were agreed by the other local authorities as required by the DTC.

NWLDC accept that the housing requirement for the SFRI is disputed by the local councils and residents, but consider that only the changes to SNPP need to be considered. A report commissioned by them by JG Consulting supports this view. The basis of both the original SFRI housing requirement and the JG Consulting report is based on the fact that overall half the workforce in NW Leicestershire are resident in the district. However this is an erroneous simplistic approach. The SFRI is located on the borders of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire thus attracting workforce from these towns. Evidence submitted to the Roxhill enquiry by the East Midlands airport authority, nearby, who is a major employer who has monitored its workforce demographic for several years submitted that only 14% of its workforce live in NW Leicestershire. The warehouse developer suggested that 20% of the workforce would reside in NW Leicestershire. NWLDC and Derbyshire signed a MOU that 219 houses was the housing requirement for NWL associated with the SFRI.

NWLDC have totally ignored both the MOUs That they have signed with local authorities. They have not cooperated with those authorities in increasing their agreed minimum OAN of 5700 houses to the 14000 now recommended. The housing numbers in the Local Plan are based on erroneous data and have been produced and approved without the cooperation of its partners. The plan should be suspended until the commissioned HEDNA and subsequent new MOU is agreed by the authorities that have objected to this plan.

C Does Policy S1 of the Plan with MM1 proposed by the council make appropriate, justified and effective provision....

The housing provision in the local plan is based on flawed evidence as shown in other section of the submission. Over the development of the plan housing provision has ranged from proposals of 5700 to 12500. The current proposal of 10400 houses is based on the out of date MOU . It is accepted that this needs revision as the HEDNA has be undertaken. To examine the current plan without knowledge of the outcome of this research will lead to a plan which is most likely to require significant change. A reduction or increase in the requirement will require a significant adjustment in the allocation making the current plan unsound.

NWLDC have suggested that this could be accommodated by an early review. We content that this action is inappropriate and that the examination should be suspended until the HEDNA information is available.

D does the plan give appropriate consideration to the emerging Neighbourhood Plans

The Ashby de la Zouch Neighbourhood Plan was prepared in advance of the Local Plan submission document. There was a clear proposal for the development of Ashby delivering a growth in line with the average needs of the district. The subsequent district policy of focussing development on Ashby was contrary to the NP.

We were therefore reluctantly required to alter the NP to be in line with the local Plan. NWLDC have given no consideration to the NP and refused to adopt any of it's proposed policies into the local plan and have indeed requested their removal.

2. VISION, OBJECTIVES AND SPATIAL STRATEGY

a Is the Plan founded on justified and effective vision and objectives?

No, the plan due to its late submission is based purely on what developers have submitted and whatever vision was initially in place has been overwhelmed.

The initial vision was centred around the regeneration of Coalville, with major sustainable urban extensions. One of these extensions was eliminated by the public opposition to the development of the green wedge between Coalville and Whitwick. This led to the reallocation of houses from Coalville to Ashby. The other urban extension of Bardon Grange has been blighted by the inability to provide sustainable transport links either by the Bardon Road by pass or Hugglescote Crossroads. Again viability and delivery issues have led to further allocation to Ashby. The SFRI approval has led to further housing requirements which have been directed to Ashby due to inability to allocate sufficient land in the Castle Donington area.

These issues alongside the developer desire to develop highly profitable sites in Ashby have driven the plan, not the vision.

b Is the spatial Strategy of the Plan justified and effective in particular respect to...

NWLDC have taken the easy option of reacting to submitted planning applications. Their decisions and policies have been amended as the developers' wishes emerged. Once the overall policy of moving large quantities of development to Ashby the only alternatives considered were which sites in Ashby were most suitable. Other sites in the District and Coalville had little consideration.

In the local plan Ashby has been considered as the 2nd town in the district whereas previously it had equal status with other main towns. This was done to justify a larger housing allocation for the town.

Impact of towns in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire have not been adequately considered in their contribution to the housing requirement in the north west of the district particularly in relation to the SFRI.

There are many brownfield sites in Coalville town Centre which don't seem to be able to be developed as either industrial or housing to aid in the regeneration of the town.

The building of major employment sites at Bardon and Castle Donington with expensive housing at Ashby leads to extensive commuting.

3. HOUSING LAND REQUIREMENTS

- (a) The local plan is based on an AON that is out of date. This is recognised by the commissioning of HEDNA to reassess the need. It has also been successfully challenged at appeal.
- (b) (c) The adjustment to the AON to take into account economic growth is flawed. The major inaccuracy is the calculation of the housing required in NW Leicestershire to support the SFRI which is dramatically overstated. The proposal to place the housing requirement in Ashby will lead to unsustainable travel. Also due to high house prices in Ashby blue collar staff will not be able to afford to live in Ashby.

5 HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

- a. b. A very large percentage of the housing to be delivered are dependant on two sites, Moneyhill in Ashby and Grange Road in Coalville.
Moneyhill is constrained by the River Mease issue and delivery after 2025 is dependant on the sewerage diversion being in place. This is most unlikely. Also the trajectory shows a build rate of 130 houses per annum. This is very optimistic. Sales on this site will be in competition with three other major sites in the town building at the same time. In recent years the best build rate in the town achieved 65 houses p.a, on a site of 450 houses with two builders building simultaneously.
Grange Road also projects a build rate of 130 houses p.a three times that of any other site in Coalville. Although this will be a multiple builder site it is unlikely that simultaneous sales will be achieved by developer throughout the build period. This site is also in competition with 30 other developments in Coalville.
We conclude therefore that these two sites are not deliverable and the trajectory will not be met.
- d. The allocation for Moneyhill is excessive and not required. The trajectory of existing approved sites (11200 houses) will deliver the plan adequately without this allocation. Also when the SFRI requirement is corrected this will reduce the housing requirement by 2000 houses.
- e. The Moneyhill and Grange Road developments will not deliver in the timescale or delivery rate proposed.
- f. Due to the reliance on two main sites delivery at a high rate and the ground works required to commence development on these sites the 5 yr land supply will not be attained at the 20% buffer as required.
- h. The Moneyhill and Measham sites have impact on the condition of the River Mease. We believe that adequate mitigation as described in DCS 2 cannot be achieved and that these allocations should be moved out of the catchment area.
- i. The provision already made for Moneyhill is excessive. The additional land allocation was not needed in the consultation local plan and is included at the developers request not through a housing land requirement.

6. EMPLOYMENT

The employment needs for the district need to be adjusted by the approval of Roxhill and the HS2 impact on the lounge warehouse at Ashby. The housing requirements of these two major sites will also require adjustment.

The Moneyhill allocation should be questioned as in the sustainability appraisal it scored worse than any other site in the district. The Ashby allocation for employment should be revisited in light of any adjustments to housing allocation.

If the whole allocation for Moneyhill is approved then the site should be made sustainable by the inclusion of necessary health and leisure requirements. The masterplan for this site is still not available.

8. COUNTRYSIDE AND OPEN SPACES

The plan should designate local green space. There are valued areas of separation between towns and villages etc and landscapes and views associated with listed buildings. In the 2002 local plan these areas were defined and protected. Within and around Ashby there are spaces such as the Bath Grounds, western and Hood park which are valued leisure and landscape areas. Currently the local plan gives them little protection against development.

Leaving the designation to the neighbourhood plan will only protect areas with a NP, thereby leaving all areas except Ashby unprotected.

9. ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

The curtilage of heritage assets if open space are not adequately protected and need to be recognised under this policy or Local Green Space policy.

Policy EN2 gives inadequate protection to the River Mease. DCS 1 has failed to mitigate the impact of development. DCS2 will also not deliver the mitigation promised. DCS2 recognises that the mitigations proposed are not sustainable and that pump out of sewerage from the district will be the long term solution. Meanwhile no mitigation of the impact of housing of the River Mease is being undertaken.