

Examination in Public

Hearing Statement

Spatial Strategy

No evidence

I see no convincing evidence that any serious attempt has been made to explore the possibility of a new, Garden Village in the District. In that respect the Local Plan has not been positively prepared, is less than effective and is not consistent with government policy.

What exactly has the Council done to actively seek out a suitable site? **How did the “extensive call for sites” manifest itself?** I see no evidence.

In fact the Planning Department is dismissive about initiating new settlements, saying **“No sites of sufficient size were put forward”**. This does not suggest a very proactive and determined approach, in fact the Council says that it **“continues to resist calls for a Garden Village on the basis that no site has been identified”** (ref: Sustainability Appraisal Report Part 3 Annex A para 3.1).

The consultation commissioned from **ClearLead Consulting** was **“to appraise the concept of a new Garden Village”**. But the Government are clearly intent on driving through the creation of Garden Villages nationally and so have presumably already appraised this **concept** to their satisfaction. This consultation was therefore a pointless waste of public money, and reading the Conclusions to the report it seems to be merely looking for reasons not to proceed with this option.

The timescales imposed on the Local Plan seem to have been used from the beginning to avoid looking seriously at the Garden Village option. The Council say **“the Local Plan process should not be delayed to pursue such an option”**. They seem determined to kick this option into the long grass. **Has the Planning Department sat down and met with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), for example?** A meeting was offered by the Department in letter from them to Paul Wilson of 15 June 2016. Or **have they even met with Derbyshire County Council** who are developing the new Infinity Garden Village south of Derby, to gain from their experience?

The initial Government prospectus for Garden Villages invited proposals with only a 4 month notice period – clearly they did not anticipate fully worked out proposals. For example, the Infinity Garden Village does not even meet their criteria, being effectively an extension of a Derby suburb, not a distinctly separate settlement. This demonstrates how keen the Government is to bring forward such developments.

Vision for the future

This Plan has been approached as a conventional, small minded, planning exercise, characterised by incremental expansion and in-filling of existing settlements. This plan needs to be re-fashioned with some creativity and a vision for the future. We need a plan which does not just patch things up for the next 10 years but which has a vision for the next 100 years, otherwise we will be back here again in 10 years time repeating the same exercise.

With 47% of the population concentrated in the Matlock to Wirksworth pinch-point and in Ashbourne (Local Plan para 2.2) and with the rest of the district very rural in character, this District is ideally suited to the creation of a Garden Village.

A Garden Village in the south of the district is the place to start.

The reasons for rejecting the Garden Village are not justified.

I want briefly to show what the Council could engage with if it was so minded.

Housing Need – Pinch Point

The objectively assessed housing need (OAN) is almost 6,000 houses. This plan focuses development in and around the Matlock pinch-point: the Darley Dale, Matlock, Cromford, Wirksworth corridor, highly constrained by the geography of the area, leading to in-filling at inappropriately high densities.

Not urban housing

People do not come here to live in urban, high density housing, they come for the countryside and to have some local green space, for children to play and to walk their dogs,

Yet this plan is intent on filling up any existing green space within our communities with urban density housing, depriving the current residents of their highly valued green space.

Big impact of current approach

The current plan with all its in-filling and settlement boundary expansion, by definition will meet the maximum number of objections to the proposed developments simply because it significantly impacts the lives of the maximum number of people. This reduces the likelihood of the plan objectives ever being achieved. It also incrementally overloads the capacity of the current local facilities.

6,000 houses means something like 7,000 or so jobs will be required for these households unless they are all going to live on benefits. This is simply not going to happen with the housing distribution as proposed. These people can't all work in care homes or coffee shops.

The Council has a policy of attracting "**high-wage, high-skill jobs**" (para 3.3 of LP), but there is no significant germ of high-tech industry to feed this growth in the Matlock pinch-point. Just how is the council intending to make these new jobs materialise out of nowhere? This is just wishful thinking. However, these job opportunities could be available in the very south of the district.

Garden Village in the south

In the south of the district, just north of the A50 and Doveridge, between the A52 and A50, there is a large area of undistinguished countryside of marginal utility. There are virtually no roads for this countryside to be seen from. There is a very small smattering of hamlets, mostly not much more than the occasional, single, isolated farm. It is a nondescript area of land.

The South of Ashbourne Rural Accessibility Study (CD37 and 38) classes the wider area around there as being "**sparse**", with "**poor levels of accessibility to services and facilities**". Most hamlets don't have even basic community facilities. There are no GP surgeries in the area, no food retailers, no post offices. But, if you drive through the area you will come across a number of **For Sale** signs.

Yet, Uttoxeter is a significant market town with extensive facilities, only some 2 to 3 miles away from the area proposed.

Communications

This area is immediately adjacent to the A50 which can support distribution and warehousing businesses because of the excellent road system and connection to the motorway network. This is impossible around the Matlock pinch-point which is a transport bottleneck.

Employment

There is easy access to employment along A50: Rolls Royce, Bombardier, Toyota, University of Derby, all Derby industry, Derby Hospital, prisons (Sudbury, Foston Hall), plus JCB and the Ashbourne Airfield Industrial estate. These employment centres do not exist elsewhere in the Derbyshire Dales District and such employment will not come to the centre and north of the district due to lack of existing industry to cross-fertilise with and its poor communications. Future houses must be built where people want to live, viz. near to centres of employment.

Our agglomeration economy means that companies want to locate near other innovative companies so that they can find skilled, educated and specialized workers. They want to be near the specialized services they need. And they want to benefit from “**knowledge spill over**,” in which people in one company learn from innovations in other companies near them, through professional and social networks.

Such agglomeration is happening adjacent to the A50 near Derby, it is **never** going to happen around the Matlock pinch-point with its no tech, poor communications environment.

Communications with Department for Communities and Local Government

I wrote to the Minister for Communities and Local Government (08/08/16) outlining this proposition and in reply (15/08/16 forwarded to Paul Wilson DDDC) was told ***“your thoughts align really well with what Government has been doing to increase***

housing supply". And the Government ***"will support"*** such initiatives if they are ***"stand-alone new communities"***. And that ***"new garden villages will have a key role to play in providing a long-term supply of housing for future generations."***

Government support

In the Government White Paper of Feb 2017, the Government asks local authorities ***"to be as ambitious and innovative as possible to get homes built in their area."***

It points out that only around 11 per cent of land in England has been built on and that ***"new communities are often more popular with local communities than piecemeal expansion of existing settlements."***

The White Paper also says that ***"the Government will legislate to allow locally accountable New Town Development Corporations to be set up, enabling local areas to use them as the delivery vehicle. The Government will also explore what opportunities garden cities, towns and villages might offer for bringing large-scale development forward in ways that streamline planning procedures."***

There has also been a recent amendment to the housing legislation allowing local government to set up Housing Development Corporations to facilitate such significant new developments. So it must now be even easier to progress along this route.

As the Daily Telegraph points out (2/1/17) ***"The 14 currently planned new villages are the first of a new kind of development designed to alleviate concerns about large scale schemes swamping existing towns. There are plans to extend the Garden Villages project even further, with more funding being made available."***

Make it happen

Surely it must be possible, perhaps with the aid of developers such as Redrow, who have experience of this type of development, to find one or two landowners in the south of the district with a dozen fields or more of little utility, who would like to become multi-millionaires over-night by selling a few fields.

This Council should be tasked with going down to London, sitting down with the Department for Communities and Local Government and **seriously** exploring such an opportunity.

What this Council needs is commitment, and a real vision for the long term future.

A firm commitment to developing a new Garden Village should be included in this Plan.

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Rodney Howlett

9 May 2017

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