

Stage 1 Local Plan Examination

Session 2 / Matter 2 - The Spatial Strategy

Hearing Date: Tuesday 9th May 2017 at 11.00am

A Submission by Jonathan Jenkin BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI from Planning Design Practice on behalf of Wildgoose Homes in response to the Matters and Questions raised by the Inspector Mr Mark Dakeyne BA(Hons)MRTPI

The Spatial Strategy

Derbyshire Dales Planning Area has two distinct areas of population. The principal area is Matlock, Wirksworth & Darley Dale; a grouping of towns with associated villages in the Derwent & Ecclesbourne Valleys and Ashbourne and its associated hinterland close to the Derbyshire and Staffordshire border in the River Dover catchment.

The population split is roughly 65%/35%. In previous iterations of the Local Plan and in the adopted 2005 local plan development was similarly split with 65% in Matlock/Wirksworth/Darley Dale; 30% in Ashbourne and 5% in the rural villages.

Matlock is the service centre for the District as a whole; it is also the operational base for Derbyshire County Council. It has good transport links being on the A6 corridor with a railway station and excellent bus services. Bus services are both local and long distance with direct links to Manchester, Derby and London. Up to three buses an hour run between Matlock & Darley Dale.

The council in preparing its strategy has taken a neutral stance with respect to directing development to the most sustainable locations in and around the principal settlements. Whilst the hierarchy seeks to place most development in and around the market towns the council has not identified locations or places where development should be concentrated.

There has been no appraisal based upon access to services - public transport, ease of access to schools and health facilities. To do so within the Matlock Sub-area would identify the Darley Dale Corridor - the land between Matlock and Darley Dale (village centre) as the most sustainable location to accommodate development. Matlock is characterised by steep gradients into and out of the Derwent Valley. This makes development to the north and south of the town difficult to accommodate. The corridor has the distinction of being fairly level, with plenty of trees and a sub-urban character. The corridor has walking and cycling routes and with excellent bus services it is ideal for walking and cycling and reductions in the use of the private car.

The spatial vision does not clearly define a spatial strategy nor does it provide a clear vision of the quality of life that will be delivered through the plan. As such it does not add value to the plan and is superfluous to it.

The Settlement Hierarchy (Policy S3) lead to development being focussed in the larger settlements but it is inadequate because it does not seek to direct development within and around the principal settlements.

The Position of Settlements in the Hierarchy

The two principal towns are Matlock and Ashbourne, Wirksworth and Darley Dale are smaller (5,000 – 6,000 populations) but all provide good access to services and employment. Wirksworth is more self-contained and includes a secondary school while Darley Dale has better public transport facilities, very good health services and access to a wider range of employment options.

It is reasonable to look at all four settlements as the District's main urban areas and the primary focus for growth and development. There is no purpose in defining Darley Dale separately from the 3 market towns and placing it on a second tier.

It is the third largest settlement in the District and has a good balance of housing and employment. It has a good range of shops and services and two primary schools. Daley Dale is also a focus for elderly persons housing with several care homes, the minor injuries hospital, the Dementia centre and a Retirement village (St Elphins). The sub-area's main sports centre straddles the boundary between Matlock Town and Darley Dale Parish.

The high quality bus service between Darley Dale and Matlock, the gentle gradients along the A6 corridor and the built up nature of the corridor make it suitable for sustainable housing developments without impacting upon the wider landscape character of the area. Darley Dale has always been part of a greater Matlock sub-area, the aim of greater self-containment is not a realistic or desirable aim given its close proximity to Matlock.

Revised Settlement Hierarchy:-

Principal Settlements – First Tier

- Matlock
- Darley Dale
- Wirksworth
- Ashbourne

Tiers 3, 4 and 5 remain the same but are re-numbered 2, 3 and 4

2. Levels of Growth within the Settlement Hierarchy

Whilst the council has provided a SHLAA to identify potential development land the council has not sought to undertake a capacity study of each principal settlement and has not sought to direct growth to specific locations in and around each settlement. Because some settlements have more developable land than others within a tier setting proportionate levels of growth for each settlement within a particular tier should not be undertaken.

3. Settlement Boundaries

The council has always been inconsistent in its application of development boundaries and where it does have boundaries these are very tightly drawn.

This inconsistency is most apparent along the Darley Dale Corridor between Matlock and Darley Dale settlement boundaries where significant levels of housing and other development are left outside any boundary. The amount of development between the two settlements is large and of a size greater than any single settlement outside the principal settlements. Development boundaries should be first redrawn to accommodate the development that exists rather than what the council would like to exist. Currently it means that housing along the A6, Grove Lane, Two Dales, Old Road and Normanhurst Park including proposed site allocations will remain in the open countryside rather than part of any village or town boundary. It means that development in these locations will be subject to countryside policies (Policy S5) which would be clearly inappropriate. Attached maps 001 and 002 illustrate the issue

In its revised form as outlined above it is appropriate to have settlement framework boundaries for the First 3 tiers (first 4 tiers in draft Policy S3) as it gives local communities certainty as to the extent of expected development and what opportunities might be available to homeowners and developers.

Boundaries should be drawn slightly wider to allow some outward expansion to allow an appropriate level of windfall opportunities and opportunities to develop small sites as part of a drive to develop SME builders and developers.

4. The Garden Village Option

The council has been able to show that there are sufficient developable sites in and across the district which are well related to sustainable settlements to meet the objectively assessment housing needs of the District. There is therefore no requirement for a new Garden Village.

5. The Generic Strategic Policies S2, S4 & S5

Policy S2:- This is descriptive rather than a policy. It seeks to define sustainable development within the Derbyshire Dales context and if included it should be part of the text to the plan but not a policy.

Policy S4:- points a) – f) are consistent but the criteria on page 39 are covered by other policies in the plan and do not need to be included.

Policy S5:- This is not consistent with national policy or with Policy S3. S3 allows infill and consolidation in named villages with no village boundary and these conflicts with S5. S5 should also allow for residential development on the edges of main settlements and tier 3 villages if it represents sustainable development or if the Council cannot prove a 5 year housing supply. It takes no account of the Darley Dale corridor and places such as Hackney and Two Dales along the corridor which are clearly not part of the open countryside. Either this policy is changed or settlement boundaries need to include all built up areas.