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Derby Local Plan – Examination (Day 1: Tuesday 26th April 2016)

Opening Address by Andrew Waterhouse

Thank you Sir,

Firstly, and on behalf of Derby City Council, I would like to welcome you to our City. I hope you enjoy your time here, not just in examining our Local Plan but also during your stay here. And I hope you are able to do a little exploring of the city - over and above site visits, especially the city centre which has a number of hidden gems, especially on its northern side.

Sir, preparation of our Local Plan has been something of a labour of love. I think work began in earnest on it in 2008, not long after adoption of the City of Derby Local Plan Review in 2006.

In those days, it was very much a child of the emerging East Midlands Regional Plan which was published (adopted) in March 2009.

This included a policy of urban concentration, focussing growth on the 3 Cities of Derby, Nottingham and Leicester. Indeed, in 2006 the 3 Cities and their Housing Market Areas had been designated by Government as a Growth Point.

From these early days, the three planning authorities of the Derby HMA decided to prepare separate, but aligned Core Strategies. The idea was to work jointly on evidence gathering as appropriate and to align our work programmes as closely as possible and to make sure that policy development was joined up.

In February 2009, we produced a document asking about 'Issues and Ideas' and in January 2010, we produced an 'Options Paper'. This identified two broad strategic options for the city, one seeking to concentrate development entirely on brownfield sites within the urban area. The other for regeneration with some greenfield expansion, in effect recognising that development needs could not be met on brownfield sites alone. This option also asked whether we should identify a small number of large sites or a large number of small sites.

And of course, these consultations were within the context of the then adopted Regional Plan.

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In May 2010, a new coalition Government came into power with a clear aim of abolishing the Regional Plan and introducing the concept of Localism. As a result, all three HMA authorities decided to 'take a step back' from where we were and to look at the strategic issues afresh involving the community in this. This was partly to address criticism during the consultations that the Regional Planning process was imposing development on local communities without understanding those communities.

To this end, we prepared a series of Neighbourhood Townscape Character Assessments which have helped develop our evidence base, policies and site allocations.

In July 2011, all three authorities consulted on a single document 'Derby HMA: Options for Housing Growth'. Anticipating abolition of the Regional Plan, this sought views on two strategic issues:

- How much housing land should we be planning for, and
- How should this be distributed across the HMA

In terms of distribution, four broad options were identified:

- Concentrate most development in and adjoining Derby – essentially the Regional Plan strategy
- A greater role for other towns
- A greater role for rural settlements, and
- A new settlement or settlements

Following this, we commissioned GL Hearn to undertake a Housing Requirements Study as these had emerged as good practice in terms of arriving at a robust assessment of housing need. This was published in September 2012 and subsequently integrated into our SHMA.

In October 2012, along with the other two HMA authorities – we consulted on our Preferred Growth Strategy. This included an assessment of the previous year's consultation on options and an explanation for the emerging HMA wide strategy which continued a focus on growth in and around Derby. Part of the justification for this was the significant housing need arising from the City, the

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sustainability benefits of a City and the lack of suitable available sites elsewhere to justify a significant departure from this strategy.

And I would add that whilst this is an important component of the HMA housing strategy, in practice as the other two Council's plans developed towards Submission the scale of housing need has meant that both towns and villages are also now playing a greater role than originally envisaged.

Sir, I turn now to the development of the strategy for the urban area of Derby.

Derby is clearly a City that has grown up to its administrative boundaries and is now quite constrained in terms of identifying new land for development. The former Regional Plan recognised that we would not be able to meet all of our housing needs within our current boundaries and the evidence we have gathered since 2010 has confirmed this.

In developing our strategy, we have sought balance. We have not ducked difficult decisions.

Urban regeneration and the development of brownfield sites is a very important part of our strategy, but we recognise that we cannot rely entirely on such sites to ensure a deliverable plan and a significant boost in house building.

And so we have looked at greenfield sites, including sites emphatically rejected by previous Local Plan Inspectors on sustainability grounds.

We have looked very carefully at our long standing green wedges and we have made some very difficult decisions regarding the release of land within them.

But we want Derby to remain a place where people want to live, work and socialise. We want to maintain a sustainable urban structure which ensures good access to shops and services, open space and which protects the identity of different communities.

We want Derby to remain the 'liveable' City that it is.

Cities naturally grow outwards as well as look within themselves for development opportunities. We believe that this requires balance and that we have got the balance about right.

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We have adopted a flexible approach to the various requirements of development, seeking to ensure that necessary infrastructure and affordable housing is properly delivered whilst ensuring that this will not inhibit delivery by making development unviable.

And neither is our plan just about housing. We seek the regeneration of older areas and are planning for significant new employment opportunities. Infinity Park, to the south of Sinfin, will be a world class employment centre with sustainable access to residential areas to its east and west. Sustainable growth in this part of the City is part of a long term strategy that goes back to plans we prepared in the early 1990's. And having worked on those plans, it is very gratifying to see them fully coming to fruition.

Our strategy recognises the changing role and function of the city centre and seeks to respond to this and help deliver a city centre renaissance.

We are maintaining our green infrastructure networks and, despite limits to the public purse, are seeking to improve these.

Sir, in conclusion, we have developed a plan based on the evidence. We have listened to what people have said to us and we have taken on board national policy in favour of sustainable development and the need to boost significantly the supply of housing land.

We have sought to achieve a balance between brown and greenfield development, big sites and small sites, sites within the City and urban extensions to it. We have sought a flexible approach to infrastructure needs and affordable housing to help deliverability.

In trying to reconcile competing views as to what our strategy should be, we believe we have struck the right balance.

Thank you.

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