

CENTRAL LINCOLNSHIRE LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION – MATTER 4 RESPONSES BY THE DROVE LANDOWNERS PARTNERSHIP IN RESPECT OF ISSUE 4I: SLEAFORD WEST QUADRANT SUE (10 OCTOBER 2016)

Introduction and Background

This Statement is submitted on behalf of The Drove Landowners Partnership (DLP), a consortium of five landowners who are promoting land to the west of the built up area of Sleaford and east of the A15, as a Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) known as Sleaford West.

The land that forms the Sleaford West SUE has been considered and promoted for large-scale residential development for a considerable period of time. Landowner interest in the promotion of the land was first confirmed to North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) in 2008, and in 2011 the Sleaford Masterplan (NKDC, 2011) identified the area as a SUE.

Preparation of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Core Strategy CLLPCS followed, during which Sleaford West was formally promoted as a SUE by the DLP, supported by numerous technical feasibility studies. At the time of submission of the CLLPCS to the Secretary of State in October 2013 the land formed one of a number of strategic allocations for SUEs in Central Lincolnshire.

The CLLPCS was withdrawn in January 2014, principally in response to concerns that, against the background of an acknowledged under-supply of housing compared with national planning policy requirements, the ‘back loading’ of the Plan’s housing delivery strategy would result in a ‘delivery gap’ in its early years.

Bearing in mind the ability of the Sleaford West site to deliver an early phase of development from the east without being dependent on the provision of the main roundabout access off the A15, and following discussions with Officers of NKDC, in the spring of 2014, it was agreed that there was considerable merit in submitting a planning application for the proposed SUE earlier rather than later. The application would be submitted in outline but would advance a phased site strategy related to an overall masterplan – itself related *in principle* to the original CLLPCS proposal, and would be justified with regard to both existing and emerging development plan policy.

Considerable pre-application discussions with NKDC, ATLAS (HCA Advisory Team for Large Applications) and statutory consultees followed, together with community consultation, including a public exhibition held in November 2015. An outline application for comprehensive development of the site for a SUE comprising the following elements was submitted by DLP in April 2016 (NKDC reference: 16/0498/OUT):

“Erection of up to 1,400 dwellings including care home, two form entry primary school, secondary education facility, employment land (3 hectares - Class B1 light industrial and offices), local centre (incorporating family restaurant/public house, 40 bed hotel, health centre, 2,000 sq.m retail floorspace and community centre), public open space and outdoor sports facilities, formation of new roundabout onto A15, improvements to Drove Lane and associated infrastructure (outline with means of access)”

At the time of writing the application is at an advanced stage of determination, and a work program to address all outstanding matters has been agreed with NKDC. The application is due to be considered at a special Planning Committee on 13 December 2016. Given that S106 Heads of Terms will be agreed prior to this Committee meeting, it is anticipated that a decision notice will be issued in January 2017. The site will then be disposed of by DLP to a number of housebuilders.

Whilst it is therefore anticipated that planning permission will be granted prior to the issue of the Examination Inspector’s Report, we set out our client’s responses to the questions set out under Issue 4i as follows to assist the Examination process. We should also emphasise that although DLP has progressed a planning application for the Sleaford West SUE, our clients have taken an active role in the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (CLLP) process, and supporting representations have been submitted at each public consultation stage.

Responses to Issue 4i Questions

Q50 What is the rationale for only providing employment uses falling in Class B1? Have other uses been considered, would they be appropriate or suitable and contribute towards the Vision of the Plan?

The DLP is of the view that it is important to provide an attractive frontage to the proposed SUE along the A15, since the main point of access to the scheme will be from this road corridor, and the development will be a prominent feature to all road users.

Class B1 uses are more likely to provide for an attractive interface with the A15 corridor than Class B2 and B8 uses as they can be accommodated within appropriate scale buildings with a good standard of landscaping. Warehouse and shed buildings typically associated with Class B2 and B8 uses would create large structures of a utilitarian appearance that generate less employment than Class B1 uses. Furthermore, Class B2 and B8 uses often operate at more anti-social hours than B1 businesses and they would be likely to cause adverse amenity impacts on the new housing uses in respect of odours, noise and traffic.

There are established business locations in Sleaford which are more appropriate for the accommodation of Class B2 and B8 uses than the Sleaford West SUE. These include the Sleaford Industrial Area (Policy E26 of the CLLP) and the strategic allocation at Sleaford Enterprise Park (Policy E5 of the CLLP).

Q51 How have the access arrangements been determined? What evidence underpins the primary access from the A15. Who will provide this? Is it viable and deliverable?

The proposed primary access for the SUE, provided off the A15 via a new roundabout, responds to the requirements of the Sleaford Masterplan (2011) that housing growth in Sleaford should not exacerbate congestion in Sleaford town centre. The access strategy for the SUE has also been informed by the Sleaford Traffic Model (July 2013, Lincolnshire County Council) and by the traffic impact assessment work carried out by the DLP to support the outline planning application.

The access strategy for Sleaford West seeks to provide for an early phase of development (approximately 200 dwellings) on the eastern side of the site making use of existing road infrastructure on Stokes Drive and St Denny's Avenue. This approach allows for early delivery of housing on the site without the need to front fund the new A15 roundabout, thus assisting housing supply at the beginning of the CLLP plan period. It also respects existing resident concerns (as expressed during the Sleaford West SUE public exhibition) that limited traffic should be routed through existing neighbourhoods.

The A15 roundabout will be funded entirely from the Sleaford West SUE (i.e. no public funds), and therefore it will be developed midway through the development once sufficient receipts have been generated from the initial phase referred to above. The roundabout has been costed by the DLP and the ongoing viability work (please see below) confirms that it is viable and deliverable.

Q52 The August 2016 Topic Paper states that a detailed viability appraisal is 'underway'. When is this likely to be completed? What evidence is there that the site is viable and deliverable?

The detailed viability appraisal is expected to be complete by late October 2016. Representatives of the DLP will be able to provide an update of this work at the Examination hearing.

The work carried out to date on the detailed viability appraisal indicates that Sleaford West SUE is a viable and deliverable scheme, and we can confirm that the DLP has received interest in it from a number of housebuilders. Significant funds (over £500,000) have been invested by the DLP in the promotion of the site through the CLLPCS and CLLP, and in the preparation of an outline application for the comprehensive development of the site. The DLP would not have invested such resources and time if the SUE was not viable and deliverable.

Q53 The August 2016 Topic Paper also indicates that affordable housing on site will be 'up to 35%'. What is this based on? How does it relate to the Local Plan through LP11?

The DLP consider that, subject to completion of the detailed viability work, the 15% affordable housing requirement set out in Policy LP11 is a more realistic policy aspiration for the Sleaford West SUE than the 35% figure referred to in the Topic Paper. However, we note that the Topic Paper provides for some flexibility – 35% is a 'maximum' figure, and the Topic Paper states that this S106 requirement (and all other planning obligations) is to be provided 'to the extent that the viability of the scheme allows'.

Q54 What is the justification for the specific infrastructure requirements? For example, Policy LP44 states that the local centre should be 1ha, a healthcare facility of 0.5ha and a minimum of 'mainly B1' use classes. What is this based on? Why is it different to the other SUEs?

The specific infrastructure requirements for Sleaford West have been identified as a result of work carried out on the CLLPCS and the considerable pre-application discussions with NKDC and statutory consultees. The infrastructure seeks to ensure that occupants of the SUE will be able to meet their day to day needs, thus ensuring a sustainable community.

We refer to the employment element of the scheme in the response to Q50 above. In respect of other elements of the SUE, the infrastructure items are broadly similar to those required for the Sleaford South SUE, although Sleaford West has a greater role in respect of healthcare and secondary education. Sleaford South is a smaller site than Sleaford West and therefore it does not have the capacity to accommodate these infrastructure items, although financial sums have been secured by NKDC to contribute towards them.