
Inspector's Matters Issues and Questions

Examination of the Darlington Local Plan

Part 1 Hearings
(Matter 7- Economic Development)



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Introduction

We have been instructed on behalf of our clients, Hellens Land Limited and Homes England, to submit a response to the Examination of the Darlington Local Plan: Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions. Hellens Group have over 40 years' experience of delivering a range of housing, leisure and infrastructure developments across the North of England. Homes England is a non-departmental public body which works to accelerate housing delivery, working with developers across the country to improve neighbourhoods and grow communities.

Our client's joint interest is in respect of the Burtree Village which is located north west of Darlington and is located within the jurisdiction of Darlington Borough Council. These representations have been submitted to support the proposed strategic allocation for 2,000 residential dwellings, 200,000 sqm of employment space, community facilities, link road and associated infrastructure at Greater Faverdale (Burtree Garden Village).

This Statement should be read in conjunction with all previous representations made on behalf of our clients in relation to Burtree Garden Village.

Our clients are committed to ensuring the strategic allocation (and the Publication Draft Local Plan) is sound and robust. Our comments will therefore focus on the following Matters:

- Matter 1: - Legal and Procedural Requirements and other General Matters
- Matter 2: Amount of development needed in the Borough
- Matter 3: Vision, aims, objectives and spatial strategy
- Matter 4: Housing development
- Matter 5: Meeting particular housing needs
- Matter 7: Economic Development
- Matter 8 – Town Centres and Retail Development
- Matter 9- – Transport and other infrastructure
- Matter 10 - Other strategic and development management policies
- Matter 11 - Other Issues

Inspector's Matters Issues and Questions

Hellens Land Limited and Homes England



This statement addresses a number of questions raised by the Inspector under Matter 7: Economic Development

Matter 7 – Economic Development

Employment allocations (policy E2 and appendix B)

Q7.2. Subject to the Council's proposed modifications, will the existing employment sites listed in policy E1 table 7.2 and employment allocations listed in policy E2 table 7.3 provide sufficient opportunities to meet the anticipated need for business, industrial and storage/distribution developments over the plan period?

With specific reference to Greater Faverdale (Strategic Mixed Use Site -185) which includes 70ha/200,000 sqm of employment land, HLL and HE consider that this allocation can make a valued contribution toward meeting the DBC's anticipated needs for business, industrial and storage/distribution developments over the plan period. Indeed, this employment growth forms the basis of the wider housing requirement and the ability to provide a mix of housing and employment on this site as a whole is a key objective of the Garden Communities programme which views this as a means to creating a vibrant mixed community.

The Site is well located strategically with excellent access to the A69 and A1(M), with Argos and Aldi distribution facilities already in situ within Faverdale Industrial Estate to the south of the Greater Faverdale site. This strategic fit in terms of its location and potential ability to deliver wider strategic growth was a key factor in the wider site forming part of the Garden Communities Programme. As demonstrated in recent months, the demand for similar logistics and warehousing developments has increased as online shopping becomes increasingly popular. The forthcoming planning application as referenced in Matter 4 will include for part of this employment land with the masterplan situating this particular employment zone adjacent to Argos and taking direct access via Rotary Way. This not only makes sense in terms of managing the transition in character between land uses, and provide a buffer for housing development but its proximity to an established and successful distribution centre may stimulate further investment.

Whilst the site has been allocated previously for employment (including as a reserve employment site), a lack of prior demand combined with viability issues and fragmented land ownership have prevented its delivery as a standalone employment site or in association with wider housing development. However, it is anticipated that the combination of its strategic location next to the A1(M), changing trends toward storage and distribution and the assistance of a mixed use development with Garden Village status and consolidated land ownership will assist in facilitating employment growth at Greater Faverdale which is viable for operators. The policy E2 as drafted also specifies "mixed use" which can only provide flexibility and increase the scope of that which could be delivered on the site in terms of employment types and premises. HLL and HE consider that due to its inclusion as part of a wider 2,000 dwelling allocation, an effective and deliverable proposition exists and that there is a reasonable prospect that it can be brought forward to meet economic objectives.

To provide further evidence regarding the above, HLL have received details of operator requirements from third parties seeking new employment land. Whilst it is not appropriate to list operators and agents which made contact on a private and confidential basis, there have been live requirements for various spaces ranging from:

- Requirements in the range of 40,000 - 115,000 sqft and one up to 750,000 sqft of Use Class B8 space within the north east from 5 separate parties, some of whom specifically required a

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Darlington/Teesside location.

- Specific requirement of 15/20 acres for R&D requirement between Newcastle and Teesside.