MATTER 1
Question 1.15
[Bassingthorpe Farm]
English Heritage
Rep. No. 528152

MATTER 1: REQUIREMENTS, VISION, STRATEGY, OBJECTIVES AND SUSTAINABILITY

Question 1.15 Should the Core Strategy identify land at Bassingthorpe Farm as a broad location for growth? What are the constraints to its development, and how could they be reduced or overcome? What are its sustainability credentials? What is the basis of the estimate of 2,400 dwellings? How would its development assist the regeneration of Rotherham town centre and the objectives of Rotherham Renaissance?

1 Introduction

1.1 The comments set out below relate to the first two questions only and deal solely with the impact which the eventual development of this area might have upon the historic environment.

1.2 In terms of constraints, the broad location for growth could, potentially, harm elements which contribute to the significance of a number of designated heritage assets. These include some of the most important heritage assets in the Plan area including Wentworth Woodhouse, its designed landscape, and a number of buildings and structures associated with the Estate. The need to ensure that these assets are appropriately conserved in line with the guidance which is set out in the NPPF could limit the quantum or form of development that can be accommodated in this area.

1.3 When the Plan was submitted for Examination, there had been no evaluation, at all, of what impact the development of Bassingthorpe Farm might have upon the historic environment or how the need to conserve the area’s heritage assets might constrain the development of this area. Consequently, English Heritage considered that the plan, as a whole, failed to demonstrate that it was setting out a positive strategy for the conservation of the historic environment in line with the requirements of the NPPF.

1.4 Since the Plan was submitted for Examination, the major landowner in this area (The Fitzwilliam Wentworth Estate) has produced a Heritage Impact Assessment [Doc. No. LEB/38] which has sought to evaluate the likely impact which the broad location for growth might have upon the historic assets in the area. The document has also put forward recommendations as to how the development strategy for Bassingthorpe Farm might be amended to remove, reduce or mitigate any harm.
1.5 English Heritage is satisfied that, if the mitigation measures which are recommended in the Heritage Impact Assessment are implemented, development at Bassingthorpe could be delivered in a manner which would be unlikely to result in substantial harm to the significance of any designated heritage assets in the surrounding area including Wentworth Woodhouse and its associated assets.

1.6 However, English Heritage considers that Bassingthorpe Farm should only be identified as a broad location for growth if it can be guaranteed that the mitigation measures which are put forward in the Heritage Impact Assessment will actually be delivered. At present, these measures are not securely and effectively tied into the Plan.

1.7 English Heritage has agreed with RMBC amendments to the wording of Policy CS1 and its supporting text which, if incorporated into the Plan, would satisfy English Heritage’s concerns.

2 Constraints to the development of Bassingthorpe Farm

2.1 The designated heritage assets which could, potentially, be affected by the proposed development at Bassingthorpe Farm have been identified in the Heritage Impact Assessment. English Heritage agrees that these assets are the ones which are most likely to be affected should the broad location for growth be developed and, as such, represent the main constraints to the realisation of the strategy for this area. We also agree with the Assessment’s evaluation of the elements which contribute to the significance of each of these assets.

3 The means by which the constraints could be reduced or overcome

3.1 The Heritage Impact Assessment has sought to evaluate what impact the development of each of the proposed development sites identified in the Bassingthorpe Farm Concept Framework [Document. No. KSD/6] would have upon each of the heritage assets of the area. Insofar as it is possible given the stage of the proposals, English Heritage would concur with the conclusions reached in that Assessment regarding the likely impact which each of the scheme’s elements might cause to the significance of the heritage assets in this part of Rotherham.

3.2 Where harm has been identified, the Heritage Impact Assessment has set out ways by which these adverse impacts might be removed or reduced. English Heritage would endorse all the mitigation measures which have been put
forward especially those which help to reduce harm to Wentworth Woodhouse and its parkland:

- The deletion of Site CB1 (which, if developed, would have harmed the setting of the Registered Park and Garden and the historic approach to Wentworth Woodhouse from the south-east).
- The reduction in the size of Site CB3 (which would have harmed the setting of the Grade II Listed Glossop Lodge and the rural approach to Wentworth Woodhouse along Cinder Bridge Road).
- Retaining open areas within development parcels BUV1a, BUV2a, CB2 and the south-east area of CH1 which are currently visible from the principal rooms of the East Front of Wentworth Woodhouse.
- Retaining open areas within development parcels BUV1a, BUV2a, BUV1b, BUV3b, BUV3c and BUV-MU1 which are currently visible from the terrace of Wentworth Woodhouse.
- Ensuring that development in Parcel EMPI is kept below the ridge line of the hill to the west of that proposed allocation.

3.3 However, despite the proposed mitigation, it is clear that some aspects of the development could still result in harm to certain elements which contribute to the significance of some of the designated heritage assets in this area. However, we would concur with the conclusions of the Heritage Impact Assessment that this would not amount substantial harm to any heritage asset in terms of the advice which is set out in the NPPF.

4 Should the plan identify Bassingthorpe Farm as a broad location for growth?

4.1 The Heritage Impact Assessment has demonstrated that the need to safeguard those elements which contribute to the significance of the designated heritage assets in the area need not prohibit Bassingthorpe Farm being identified as a broad location for growth. However, this wholly is dependent upon the mitigation measures which are set out in that document being implemented.

4.2 At present, however, Policy CS1 makes no reference to the Heritage Impact Assessment or, more importantly, to its recommendations. As a result, the mitigation measures which the Heritage Impact Assessment considers are necessary to enable development in this area to be delivered in a manner which does not harm the historic environment are not securely or effectively tied into the Development Plan. Consequently, English Heritage is concerned that there is no guarantee that these measures will actually be delivered should this area be identified as a broad location for growth. Development of Bassingthorpe Farm without the necessary mitigation would be likely to result in harm to the historic environment contrary to the advice set out in the NPPF and in conflict with the
Plan’s Policies for the protection and enhancement of Rotherham’s heritage assets.

4.3 English Heritage does not object to the identification of Bassingthorpe Farm as a proposed broad location for growth provided that the conclusions and recommendations of the Heritage Impact Assessment are firmly tied into the Policy framework of the Core Strategy.

4.4 English Heritage and RMBC have agreed changes to Policy CS1 and its justification which would address our concerns and thereby ensure that the development of Bassingthorpe Farm takes place in a manner which safeguards the historic environment of this part of Rotherham. These are set out in Annex A and have been included in the joint English Heritage/RMBC Statement of Common Ground.

6 Conclusions

6.1 If developed, there is potential for the broad location for growth at Bassingthorpe Farm to harm elements which contribute to the significance of a number of designated heritage assets. The need to conserve these assets in line with the advice in national policy guidance could, therefore, constrain the amount of development that could take place in this area as well as the form of that development. However, the Heritage Impact Assessment has demonstrated that, with appropriate mitigation, the presence of these heritage assets and, in particular, the need to safeguard those elements which contribute to their significance, should not prevent development taking place in this part of Rotherham.

6.2 However, Bassingthorpe Farm should only be identified as a broad location for growth if it can be guaranteed that the mitigation measures which are put forward in the Heritage Impact Assessment will actually be delivered. At present, these measures are not securely and effectively tied into the Plan.

6.3 English Heritage has agreed with RMBC amendments to the wording of Policy CS1 and its supporting text which, if incorporated into the Plan, would satisfy English Heritage’s concerns.