ROtherham Metropolitan Borough Council Local Plan Sites and Policies Examination

Schedule of Matters, Issues and Question

Response to the Inspector’s Main Issues and Questions

Made on Behalf of Harworth Estates (Representor ID: 533555)

June 2016

Matter 4: Overall Strategy, including settlement hierarchy

Preamble

4.1 On behalf of our Client Harworth Estates, we write to provide comments in response to Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council’s ("RMBC’s") submitted Local Plan Sites and Policies Development Plan document ("RSPD").

4.2 Our Client is one of the UK’s leading landowners and developers, committed to providing high quality and sustainable development. They have been involved in bringing forward development in Rotherham for many years through their Waverley site and therefore are very keen to engage in the Examination process in order to ensure that the RSPD is sound and supported by robust, up to date and accurate evidence.

Harworth Estates Land Interests in Rotherham

4.3 Our Client is bringing forward the Waverley development site within the Borough, this chiefly comprises:

- The Advanced Manufacturing Park ("AMP") – A world class destination for companies involved in advanced manufacturing and research. The AMP is currently home to many prestigious organisations such as Rolls Royce, Boeing and Sheffield University.
• Waverley New Community ("WNC") – Outline planning permission was originally granted in 2011 for a residential-led mixed-use development 3,890 new homes and associated retail, commercial and community uses (up to 18,698 sq m).

• Highfield Commercial ("HC") – Land adjacent to the AMP and WNC which is now being promoted through the RSPD as mixed use development including a Local Centre. This is planned to serve future and existing occupants/residents of Waverley and assist in its growth.

4.4 In addition to this, our Client also owns land around WNC which is currently located within the Green Belt but which our Client considers should be released for residential land.

4.5 Waverley itself is by far the largest development site within the Borough and its successful delivery is critical to RMBC meeting its targets set out within its adopted Core Strategy. It also forms part of the core hub of a wider Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation District ("AMID") which is being brought forward in partnership with RMBC, Sheffield City Council and other landowners with the aim to create the largest and best advanced manufacturing research area in Europe along the Rotherham/Sheffield corridor. Consequently it is vitally important that the RSPD provides a supportive context and policies which can facilitate future growth at Waverley and to enable the AMID to emerge. Further details of the AMID are appended to this Hearing Statements.

4.6 Harworth Estates was extensively involved in the preparation and examination of the Rotherham Core Strategy and some of the comments on the RSPD overlap with the points and concerns that were previously made in relation to the now adopted Core Strategy.

4.7 In principle our Client supports the emergence of the RSPD on the basis that if prepared in a robust and sound way, it will provide certainty and flexibility for developers bringing forward development sites within the Borough. However it is our Client’s considered view that there are many areas of the RSPD which are currently unsound and inflexible which will fetter future development coming forward over the plan period.

4.8 Specifically, Harworth Estates requires that a flexible approach is made for Waverley site so that development can continue to successfully emerge throughout the plan period. The NPPF is clear in Paragraph 14 that sustainable development should go ahead, without delay and that a presumption in favour of sustainable development should be the basis for every plan and every decision. This should form the cornerstone to RMBC’s approach to the RSPD.
Matter 4 is concerned with the Council’s overall strategy relating to location and distribution of development and is discussed below. The Inspector has set two overall questions plus a number of separate detailed questions. Our responses to these questions are set out below.

**OS Issue 1: Is the overall strategy for the location of development in the Borough soundly based?**

1) **What is the overall strategy for the location of new development in the Borough? What are its origins? Have other strategies been rejected?**

The overall approach for the location of development is largely informed by the settlement hierarchy contained within the Core Strategy. This distributes the majority of development to the main urban area of Rotherham and from there housing, employment and retail development is distributed according to the settlement hierarchy. It appears that the RSPD attempts to follow this pattern of development contained in the Core Strategy. Waverley itself is classified as a ‘Principal Settlement’ in the Core Strategy.

Since the adoption of the Core Strategy Waverley has continued to deliver sustainable and high quality development and has proven to be a success in help to promote growth within the Borough.

2) **Is there a case for re-consideration of the strategy?**

In accordance with RMBC’s *Housing and Economic Growth Paper (March 2016)* we agree that given the delivery of housing and other uses at Waverley, it makes up a significant proportion of RMBC’s overall Core Strategy target.

Indeed Waverley has been a success story in bringing forward sustainable development and positive growth for the Borough. On the back of this success, it is our Client’s view that additional development ought to be identified at Waverley in the form of a residential allocation to the south and expanded local centre facilities. This is possible whilst retaining its status as a Principal Settlement. This reflects our belief that housing numbers needs to be increased within the Borough and also ties in with the wider vision for the Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation District (“AMID”) which seeks to provide Europe’s largest advanced manufacturing and research area along the Rotherham/Sheffield corridor.

The AMID concept capitalises on this success to date and seeks to establish the AMP as a key hub within an area to be established as the UK’s first Advanced Manufacturing Innovation
District. This same area also forms part of the Northern Powerhouse investment portfolio which has been showcased worldwide to potential investors.

4.15 The future of the AMID is underpinned by an emerging strategy which commits this area to strong growth and development of both employment land and supporting residential development. The emerging vision for the AMID is that it will be a unique globally leading proposition that is a critical leading element of the future economy of the UK. Accordingly, its growth is essential. In order to achieve such growth the vision recognises that planning policies will need to be simple and effective to facility rapid investment and delivery of essential projects and developments within the AMID. A fuller explanation of the AMID is appended to this Hearing Statement.

4.16 The AMID clearly necessitates additional growth at Waverley including supporting residential development such as that proposed by our Client on land to the south of Waverley. The strategy for the distribution of development and settlement of hierarchy should be amended to allow for this additional growth at Waverley. This would also reflect the growth options coming through the City Region.

3) Does the overall strategy rely on a review of the Green Belt? What would be the impact on the strategy if there was no change to Green Belt boundaries?

4.17 Given the quantum of development recognised to be required in Rotherham, our Client believes there is an inevitable requirement to review the Green Belt. As outlined above, this should include our Client’s land in the south of Waverley. Therefore we believe exceptional circumstances exist to review the Green Belt.

4.18 If there were no Green Belt review, it is our Client’s view that the quantum of development required by the Core Strategy could not be met as there would be insufficient available and viable land to achieve these targets.

OS Issue 2: Is the settlement hierarchy soundly based?

4) What is the methodology behind the settlement hierarchy and the distribution of development?

4.19 Please see our earlier comments. We looking forward to hearing RMBC’s response to this question.
5) Is the settlement hierarchy reasonable and justified? What are the reasons for the grouping of various settlements?

4.20 We do believe that for the settlement hierarchy to be justified, growth at Waverley and its future status within the AMID and City Region should be acknowledged. This is outlined in more detail in our response to Question 7 below.

6) How has the amount of proposed housing and employment in each settlement/group of settlements been derived? Is this approach justified?

4.21 The approach to the amount of development in each settlement/group of settlements was discussed at length at the Core Strategy examination and which in turn has come from the Core Strategy’s evidence base.

4.22 Our Client’s view is that given the time that has elapsed since the Core Strategy adoption that the distribution of development does need re-examining. For instance, our Client’s land at Waverley now is part of a much larger growth area through the AMID and additional land is needed to be sought to help support this growth.

4.23 Waverley itself is now proven as a sustainable settlement in its own right and future development such as a new Local Centre, school and other local facilities will further add to the success of the development. In light of this, the continued expansion of the AMP and the AMID there is a clear opportunity to provide additional development at Waverley.

7) Are there any grounds for revisiting the settlement hierarchy in order to promote more growth in certain settlements and restrict development in others?

4.24 As we have outlined previously in this statement, the growth of Waverley as a proportion of total housing and employment provision in Rotherham over the plan period is significant with the Core Strategy anticipating that Waverley as an independent settlement will provide 17% of the Borough’s housing requirements and 18% of its employment land over the plan period.

4.25 Given this and the wider vision for the AMID we do believe that Waverley should be revisited so that further opportunities for growth can be realised at Waverley. This can be achieved without a change to the settlement hierarchy with additional development opportunities acknowledged which are able to support the sustainable development which is happening and which can help in the delivery of the AMID and the growth agenda of the City Region.
4.26 As part of this the land identified by our Client in the south of Waverley New Community is such an opportunity. This would represent sustainable development that can build on the success of Waverley New Community to date and help support the growth of the AMID and the City Region.