

New Settlement DPD - EiP Hearing Statement

Subject: Matter 1: Consultation

This summary statement is submitted by the Coalition of seven Parish Councils in the vicinity of the proposed New Settlement: Moor Monkton; Nun Monkton; Tockwith; Whixley; Green Hammerton; Kirk Hammerton; Hunsingore, Great Ribston with Walshford and Cattal.

Since the Inspector's Report on the Harrogate Local Plan in 2020, we have accepted the principle of development in the broad location, based on the assurances provided at that time. The Inspector insisted that this would be an exemplary development, as the Council had promised - with special regard to the implications for nearby villages - even if that then limited the number of dwellings the site could appropriately accommodate. This promise of a high-quality, carefully considered Garden Village remained our expectation up until the latest modifications.

Throughout the process, we have been led to believe that the development was aimed at long-term economic growth, rather than solely meeting short-term housing needs. (However, no analysis of the economic benefits has been presented in evidence.) The possibility of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) however, seems, post-consultation, to have prompted the Council to seek to change its narrative. We're now told that the settlement is necessary to address housing needs 'for the people of Yorkshire', thereby reducing NYC's 8,500-strong housing waiting list¹. Yet, there has been no indication of how this would be delivered within the DPD's policies.

Incidentally, a rationale has never been offered about how the number of houses was arrived at. It's been, variously during the consultations: between 2-3,000; 2,700; 3,000; and at least 3,000. (The Local Plan lists the 'capacity' of the site as 3,000².) Given the Inspector's concern about the proposed number - going so far as to suggest a plan review - and also given the issue's criticality to deliverability and sustainability, we've been struck by the Council's reluctance to consider this as a variable.

The Council's key, and ultimately problematic, decision to change its preferred site option wasn't supported by clear evidence or analysis: indeed the Liaison Group was informed that the detailed work of assessing the alternative options had been halted at an early stage.

But once we had a New Settlement Policy and a planning application with the same name, form, and boundary, concerns about the independence of the planning process were inevitable. There were no on-site presentations by the Council—only by the developer. Moreover, the developer was present at all Community Liaison Group meetings, and while the Council reassured the group that the process was plan-led, the developer openly described their planning application as a "done deal" to residents. This contradiction further undermined public trust in the consultation process.

Incidentally, during the consultation period, residents' personal details (signature, telephone numbers, addresses) on DPD comments were accessible on the Council's website; and the DPD itself was silently re-uploaded to the consultation website mid-way through with altered pagination. The Council even spells their chosen name for the settlement four different ways in its official documents, up to and including

¹ NYC Exec 12/12/23

² Harrogate District Local Plan 2014 - 2035 p533.

post-consultation policy NS38. The Council will say these are minor mistakes, but they reinforce the perception that the process has been rushed, disorganized, and lacks attention to detail.

Obviously the failure properly to interrogate land agreements when making the switch to the Caddick-based option is the most significant example of this. Whereas the Council told the Local Plan Inspector, and indeed the High Court, that land availability would not compromise the delivery of the settlement³, Caddick themselves now state that the land availability issue makes the DPD as it stands undeliverable.

What began as a promise to establish the best possible placemaking option within 635 hectares of broad location has deteriorated into a far less coherent vision. ‘Garden village’ has been expunged in the ‘Maltkiln’ DPD modifications. At the time of writing, we are being asked to comment on 6,800 pages of the latest iteration of the ‘Maltkiln’ planning application, where the main revision is an attempt to squeeze the council’s required 3,000 + houses into just 80 developable hectares, even closer to existing villages. It’s a far cry from the original promises of exemplary place-making, and it further illustrates the inadequacy of the consultation process and its failure to deliver on initial commitments.

³ Flaxby Park Limited vs Harrogate Borough Council Judgement para 163