

Council's opening statement

Firstly I would like to welcome the Inspector and all other parties to Shelf Village Hall.

The Draft Calderdale Local Plan is a product of many years of diligent work by both Officers and Members of Calderdale Council.

Whilst the Council was subject to some external criticisms on account of perceived delays publishing the Plan, the Council believes that the Plan has been robustly prepared, is founded on firm evidence, and will be found sound.

The Local Plan has been informed throughout its preparation by a long iterative process of sustainability appraisal that meets the relevant legal requirements. This appraisal has demonstrated how the plan has addressed relevant economic, social and environmental objectives.

The Local Plan was born out of what was then the Council's emerging Core Strategy in 2014, which had itself already been subject to significant public engagement.

As the Local Plan evolved and was refined it was subject to two rounds of Regulation 18 consultation in 2015 and 2017. We also undertook a number of externally facilitated workshops with local communities in the spring of 2016. A key issue discussed at those workshops was the question of the distribution of development and the relative merits of the Garden Suburb versus a pepper-potting approach.

Over 36,000 representations were made through the process. Each of which has been considered by the Council.

We have worked closely with our partner councils across the region, particularly Kirklees who we border in the southeast. We have also worked closely with other bodies, including Historic England, Highways England, Natural England and the Environment Agency. It is pleasing to note that none of these bodies has any fundamental concerns about the Plan.

Calderdale is a distinctive place that presents particular challenges and opportunities. In some respects it is a place of two halves. The west is characterised by moorlands and steep valleys, smaller settlements and protected habitats. The towns and villages of the Calder Valley were badly affected by flooding in 2012 and 2015. The east of the borough, whilst not without its

challenges, presents a more rolling and urbanised character. The other constraint affecting the area from Hebden Bridge to the east is the tightly drawn Green Belt.

These and a plethora of other considerations have influenced the scale and distribution of development.

There are parties who consider we should have planned for more development and other parties that argue we are proposing too much development. Ultimately the Council has had to reach its own judgements about the scale of development based on the evidence before us. This will be discussed in detail during the Hearings; however, I will say at this stage that the requirement to demonstrate exceptional circumstances in order to justify the release of land from the Green Belt has been foremost in our minds.

Calderdale is a place of enterprise and talent. Accordingly, the Local Plan is facilitating the creation of modern, fit-for-purpose employment space, supported by 21st century infrastructure. The most significant employment allocation in the Local Plan is the Enterprise Zone site at Clifton. We are very mindful though that young people will be the next generation of entrepreneurs and workers. With this in mind detailed consideration is being given to the delivery of school places in appropriate locations and facilities.

The devastating floods that I've already mentioned brought the need for resilience to the fore. These notions are reflected in our approach to planning for health and wellbeing and infrastructure planning. We have worked very closely with the Calderdale Clinical Commissioning Group; the Council's Public Health Directorate and met with groups of GPs in southeast Calderdale. We have also continued to develop our narrative around infrastructure through the IDP, which was published in 2018 and refreshed in 2019. This is an iterative document which will be refreshed again before we reach the stage 2 hearings in November.

Drawing this statement to a conclusion, I have no doubt that there will be a robust discussion as we move through the various hearing sessions; however, the Council is clear that there has been effective and on-going joint working between strategic policy-making authorities and relevant bodies; the strategy has been positively prepared and is justified; and the policies are underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence and are consistent with relevant national policy.

The Council therefore looks forward to the adoption of its Local Plan and moving forward to implement its policies and allocations.