

## **Position Statement: Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan and Draft Ranskill Neighbourhood Plan**

### **1: Overview**

This position statement seeks to clarify the relationship between the emerging Ranskill Neighbourhood Plan and the emerging Bassetlaw Local Plan, and to identify how recent developments have led to the decision by Ranskill Parish Council to withdraw the Draft Ranskill Neighbourhood Plan and curtail the associated regulation 14 consultation.

### **2: Current Situation**

#### **2.1: Withdrawal of the Draft Ranskill Neighbourhood Plan**

As of 7 December 2020, Ranskill Parish Council has decided, reluctantly, to withdraw the Draft Ranskill Neighbourhood Plan and to curtail the associated regulation 14 consultation, which had commenced on 15 November 2020 and was due to conclude on 15 January 2021. This is formalised in the accompanying notice from the Parish Council. This action is intended to stem any confusion that could arise following the subsequent publication of and public consultation on the Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan (November 2020), which includes a revised housing requirement figure for Ranskill, different to that used to develop the Neighbourhood Plan.

#### **2.2: Context**

The pre-submission Draft Ranskill Neighbourhood Plan was published for consultation on 15 November 2020. Development of the Neighbourhood Plan has been underway since 2016. Following a spell of inactivity during 2018, the Steering Group was revived in 2019, and sought to realise a Plan that reflected the aspirations of the community, as captured in the 2016 Village Survey.

Key to this process was the identification of housing sites to meet the housing requirement figure provided by Bassetlaw District Council in the emerging Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan. As published, the pre-submission Draft Ranskill Neighbourhood Plan reflected the 20% housing requirement figure for Ranskill included in the then-current January 2020 version of the Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan. To do this, the Plan proposed allocating one site to the west of Great North Road (NP19), capable of accommodating all of the outstanding housing requirement, alongside a village hall, retail provision, and public open space. These proposals had been worked-up following a call for sites, site assessment work, and two rounds of public consultation.

#### **2.3: Local Plan context**

The Bassetlaw Local Plan has been under development since 2016. This has been in response to changes to national planning policy and feedback from the consultation periods that have been

undertaken during that time. Various strategies and approaches have been consulted on, including consideration of the specific needs of rural communities. In 2016, the initial 'issues and options' version of the Plan proposed an approach to rural growth characterised by functional clusters. It set a cap on future growth of 20% for those clustered settlements – for which Ranskill was one. Although a cap was set, at this point, this was not a required number. At the same time several neighbourhood plan groups – including Ranskill - were seeking further clarity on how they should apply the cap to their community.

A draft Local Plan (Strategic Plan), published in early 2019, kept the 20% cap (based on the number of dwellings in the parish) but also added-in a 10% requirement for rural settlements (based on the number of dwellings in the settlement). The addition of a housing requirement figure reflected an update to national planning policy, whereby it became a requirement for local authorities to provide neighbourhood plan areas with a housing/growth requirement figure. In the case of Ranskill, the 10% requirement figure equated to 60 dwellings, whilst the 20% cap equated to 119 dwellings.

Responses to this consultation stated that the proposed application of two growth figures for each settlement, requirement and cap, was confusing, and that the Council should refine this approach. In addition, it was also identified that the broader spatial strategy needed to be refined in order to address complexities with other locations and sites. In early 2020, these refinements were reflected in the publication of a full draft Local Plan. This removed the cap figure previously proposed for rural settlements, and maintained the growth requirement figures, albeit at a higher level. This was set at 20% of the existing number of dwellings in the parish. For Ranskill, this equated to 121 dwellings (a slight revision from the previous number).

Following the publication of the next version of the Draft Bassetlaw Plan, on 25 November 2020, the housing requirement figure for Ranskill and the majority of other Small Rural Settlements has been reduced to 5%, as part of a reframing of policy ST2. This revision reflects changes to the spatial strategy as a whole, the high level of planning commitments already in place in the rural area, and comments received from the rural communities during the last consultation, earlier this year.

Producing a District-level housing strategy in the context of an area with significant uptake of neighbourhood planning is challenging, as it needs to be broad enough to cover all parishes, whilst still supporting their different contexts and aspirations. Consultation earlier in the year suggested that the previous approach to rural growth strategy was not achieving this, and was leading some communities into planning for more growth than they were able to or comfortable in accommodating. The revised strategy is intended to rectify this, by reducing the housing requirement for Small Rural Settlements to 5%, but still permitting growth above that subject to it being justified and supported by the community through a neighbourhood plan. In doing so, this approach is intended to place more power in the hands of communities, allowing them to consider how best to plan for their future needs. The Council considers that this is consistent with the requirements of national planning policy.

The figures detailed in Policy ST2 are supplemented by a [Rural Monitoring Table](#), which details progress in meeting the requirement figures across the District. Naturally, as time has elapsed since work to develop the Local Plan began, the number of permissions has increased. In the case of Ranskill, with 42 eligible commitments / completions recorded, this means that the revised housing requirement figure of 30 dwellings has already been met, with the figure currently showing as -12. It is acknowledged, however, that this figure could fluctuate, if it includes any permissions that eventually lapse.

## **2.4: Recent Developments**

Revised Policy ST2 in the Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan would still accommodate the principle of the approach to housing growth proposed in the Draft Ranskill Neighbourhood Plan, as it would not

preclude development over the requirement, subject to evidence-based justification and community support. In the case of Ranskill, housing development is proposed as an enabler for delivering new community facilities which may not otherwise be deliverable.

However, as this version of the Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan now identifies this level of growth as optional, rather than required as previously, the narrative in the Draft Ranskill Neighbourhood Plan is out-of-step. The Parish Council, rightly, wish to clarify the situation, and to understand the views of the community on this change and its implications for the Neighbourhood Plan before proceeding.

The publication of the most recent version of the Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan was authorised at a Cabinet meeting on 23 November 2020. It is vital that the Local Plan process is fair, and does not afford any party advantage over another. On that basis, as the nature and scope of the Plan includes site allocations and development proposals, the Plan was deemed confidential until approval, and was not publicly-available until 25 November 2020. For this reason, it was not possible for officers to provide notification of the impending changes to the Ranskill Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group in advance of the publication of their Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

### **3: Progression**

With the Draft Ranskill Neighbourhood Plan now withdrawn, and the associated regulation 14 consultation curtailed, it is at the discretion of the Steering Group / Parish Council as to how they wish to proceed. The Planning Policy and Neighbourhood Planning teams at Bassetlaw District Council will gladly support this process.

It is important to note that the Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan is, as its name suggests, a draft, and that its contents could change before it is finalised and enforceable. Equally, until the new Local Plan is adopted, a neighbourhood plan examiner will look to the existing Core Strategy for guidance, supplemented by the emerging Local Plan, alongside the National Planning Policy Framework, and evidence of work to seek local opinion and support; this leaves some room for interpretation. Consequently, it is important that any proposals made in a neighbourhood plan have the in-principle support of the community, regardless of the policy context that they sit within. Further to the above, all interested parties are encouraged to engage with the ongoing consultation on the [Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan](#), which closes on 20 January 2021, and make representations, where relevant, to assist further refinement.

**Karen Johnson**

**Planning Policy Manager**

**Bassetlaw District Council**

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