

Statement to Hearing on 19 October 2018

Respondent ID 043 : Sue Arnott

1. I am disappointed that, due to work commitments, I am now unable to attend the hearing on 19th October 2018 and offer my apologies to the Inspector.
2. For reference, I set out my initial submission as Appendix 1.
3. The main concern that I had intended to address at this hearing relates to the infrastructure required to support the proposed housing in Bentham.
4. This was highlighted by the Inspector under Matter 11 [Transport (Suggested Policy INF7, Policy INF4 and ENV12) : Issue 1 – Transport – Suggested Draft Policy INF7] and in particular his Question 3:

“The Council’s response to the Inspector’s Initial Questions also confirmed that it has commissioned “some high level traffic modelling for Bentham and Settle...” What are the reasons for this, and what does the further modelling show? What effect will the allocations and policies in the Plan have on the highway network in and around Bentham and Settle? If mitigation is necessary, how will this be delivered?”

5. I note that the Council has since produced the report (the Report) it commissioned and in particular Appendix 3 which deals with “Modelling Highway Impacts of Submission Draft Plan Developments in Bentham and Settle”. *(Please note that because this was produced only a day or two before the closing date for last submissions, I was unable to formulate my response in time and missed the deadline.)*
6. Insofar as the Report considers proposed development in Bentham, this focuses on two road junctions in the centre of the town.
7. It concludes (at 4.3.2) *“The results from Table 4-2 show that the all three junctions are forecast to operate significantly under capacity in both the Baseline and the Local Plan scenarios”,* and (4.3.3) *“The Local Plan traffic will not have any detrimental impact on any of the junctions and no junction improvement measures are required to accommodate the Local Plan development sites.”*
8. However at 4.2.5 it states: *“The junction capacity assessment software only models junctions on an individual basis and therefore does not take into account the interaction between adjacent junctions as a result of queuing or ‘platooning’ traffic”.*

9. I have no professional expertise in this area but it seems to me to be missing a vital element of the 'impact' of an increase in traffic on a small town like Bentham if it does not consider the effects of queuing traffic at two junctions that are little more than 50m apart (with roadside parking on one side of the road between which restricts passage to one-way traffic only). Its findings suggest that the Report has been compiled as a desk exercise and without any inspection of the actual site. Ironically, its recommendations appear to negate the need for any road improvements in the centre of High Bentham (despite such works being proposed elsewhere in the plan). I hope the Inspector will give little weight to the findings of the Report and that those infrastructure improvements for Bentham which are already referred to in the local plan remain so.
10. In fact this Report does not address the concerns set out in my earlier submission (which is repeated in Appendix 1).
11. Adequate road connections with the A65 at Ingleton and via the B6480 to Wray and Lancaster need to be clearly assessed as significant factors that need to be improved if the planned housing development is to take place, not just improvements to the entrances to individual sites.
12. I would like to see paragraph 3.19 amended to include references to the B6480, this being a cross-boundary route with many residents of Bentham travelling to Lancaster daily for work.
13. I would also like to see inclusion of a scheme of improvement of the Bentham - Ingleton road in paragraph 3.25.
14. Even if neither of these amendments are made, I consider the Local Plan should offer a degree of certainty that the local highway network in the Bentham area will be adequately (and independently from any specific development) assessed; at the very least I suggest that paragraph 3.4 is amended by adding "A similar exercise will be commissioned for Bentham", preferably with a realistic timetable attached.
15. I would encourage the Inspector to drive along the road connecting Robin Lane in Bentham with Bentham Road in Ingleton and to see for himself that in places this road is not wide enough for two vehicles to pass, and that there is also a section where major erosion regularly occurs as the road slips further down a steep bank. In my view, significant improvements would need to be made to this road if traffic were to increase as a result of housing development off Robin Lane on the scale proposed in High Bentham.
16. I apologise again for being unable to present this to the hearing in person but hope my comments can be taken in board by the Inspector.

Sue Arnott

14 October 2018

APPENDIX 1

I previously stated that I consider the Local Plan is not sound in the following respect:

“At paragraph 3.4, it is acknowledged that the Council “has commissioned highway modelling work to examine the strategic cumulative traffic effects on surrounding local highway network of the Council’s future options for housing in Skipton where most growth will be delivered. This work is complete and is taken account of in the IDP”.

The same exercise should also have been undertaken in relation to Bentham (a Tier 2 housing site and key Service Centre) given that there are likely to be significant effects arising from the additional traffic generated as a result of the planned development on a local road network that, in places (such as the High Bentham to Ingleton road), is ill-equipped to cope with present-day vehicular traffic, let alone any increase.

No planned road improvements are listed for the Bentham area at paragraph 3.25 other than in the centre of High Bentham.

The summary at paragraph 3.30 acknowledges that the list is not exhaustive and that “further improvements may be identified through transport modelling and over the lifetime of the plan”. However, given the strategic highway network improvements needed to enable Bentham to adequately function in future as a key Service Centre, it should not be left to “Planning applications for individual development proposals (to be) accompanied by a transport assessment or transport statement and travel plan where appropriate... (including) a detailed assessment of the transport impacts of the development such as accessibility, highway design and safety.”

Adequate road connections with the A65 at Ingleton * and via the B6480 to Wray and Lancaster need to be clearly assessed as significant factors that need to be improved if the planned housing development is to take place, not just improvements to the entrances to individual sites.

I would like to see paragraph 3.19 amended to include references to the B6480, this being a cross-boundary route with many residents of Bentham travelling to Lancaster daily for work.

I would also like to see inclusion of a scheme of improvement of the Bentham - Ingleton road in paragraph 3.25.

Even if neither of these amendments are made, I consider the Local Plan should offer a degree of certainty that the local highway network in the Bentham area will be adequately (and independently from any specific development) assessed; I suggest that paragraph 3.4 is amended by adding “A similar exercise will be commissioned for Bentham”, preferably with a realistic timetable attached.

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