1. INTRODUCTION

1.01 These representations to the examination of the Bolsover Local Plan are submitted on behalf of Henry Boot plc, who are development partners with DCC, and manage the highly successful 120 ha Markham Vale Strategic Employment Site at Junction 29A of the M1 motorway.

1.02 Markham Vale has been developed in close partnership between Henry Boot plc, Derbyshire County Council and three local authorities: Bolsover District Council, Chesterfield Borough Council and North East Derbyshire District Council.

1.03 Henry Boot welcomed the first occupiers to Markham Vale in 2009. It is now home to a wide range of businesses, including manufacturers and distributors. 1,628 employees currently work at Markham Vale (Source: DCC), providing an important source of jobs for the local area, which contains a number of locations that are amongst the 10% most socio-economically deprived areas in the country.

1.04 Since 2009, take up of land for B class uses at Markham Vale has averaged 5.3 ha net per annum. At 2019, there remains 15.34 ha net of B class land, which if take up rates continue, will have been used up in 2.89 years. However, the majority of recent enquiries for space at Markham Vale have been for larger units in the 250,000 sq. ft to 500,000 sq. ft range, which require large site areas and there is a real possibility that the remaining land at Markham Vale could be used up sooner than 2.89 years.

1.05 Henry Boot plc has therefore been looking for opportunities to continue the success of Markham Vale and in 2018 entered into a legal agreement with Chatsworth Estates to jointly promote and deliver the future expansion of Markham Vale North on circa 19 ha gross (13.65 ha net) of land in Bolsover (5.65 ha net) and Chesterfield (8 ha net). The location and extend of this land is shown on plan in Appendix 1.

1.06 The land is bounded by the M1 motorway to the south and by a former mineral railway to the north and would be accessed from the Seymour Link Road. The land is identified in the current and draft Local Plans as open countryside, but is immediately adjacent to the Markham Vale Strategic Employment Site. It is intended to submit a planning application to Bolsover and Chesterfield Councils later in 2019, so that, if planning permission were to be granted, the sites could deliver new B class employment floorspace from 2021.
1.07 We made representations to the submission draft Bolsover Local Plan in June 2018, raising concerns that the Bolsover Local Plan does not make sufficient provision for the area’s employment needs.

1.08 These representations provide a response to the Inspector’s Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) on Issue 7: employment, which asks the question:

“Is the Local Plan positively prepared, justified and effective in respect of employment?”

1.09 Our comments are set out in response to the Inspector’s specific questions.

2. EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENT: QUESTIONS 120, 121 AND 122

Q.120 Does the requirement for 92ha of employment land meet the economic development needs of the District? Is it based on an appropriate assessment?

Q.121 Is Policy SS2 sufficiently clear in respect of the employment land requirement?

Q.122 Should the target be expressed as a minimum?

2.01 In our view, Policy SS2 does not allocate sufficient employment land to meet the District’s economic development needs, based on the Council’s own evidence base.

2.02 The Council’s ‘Economic Development Needs Assessment’ (EDNA, October 2015) identified a range of employment land requirements from 23.3 ha to 129.5 ha based on four scenarios, but recommended that the Council should allocate a target of between 65 and 100 hectares of B class employment land between 2015 and 2033.

2.03 The pre-amble to Policy SS2 at para. 4.11 of the submission Plan notes that ‘there is sufficient evidence for a target at the higher end of the range’, but Policy SS2 then only seeks to allocate 92 ha of land, 8 ha short of the higher end target.

2.04 Since the EDNA was published in 2015, the Council has commissioned an update, which was published in August 2018 as the ‘Bolsover Economic Alignment Study (BEAS)’. This identifies a significantly higher need for between 76 ha and 147 ha (gross) of employment land up to 2033, as set out at para, 5.6, which concludes that:
“… it is recommended that BDC looks to allocate between 76 ha and 147 ha (gross) of employment land to accommodate demand from B-class occupiers over the period 2014 to 2033, with a figure of 112 ha recommended where a single figure is required.”

2.05 In response to this latest advice on a need for 112 ha of employment land, the Council states in its Position Paper on Employment that to increase the employment land figure may lead to suggestions that the Local Plan’s housing land targets should also be increased. However, the BEAS concludes at para. 5.27 that:

“… there is a clear argument that much of Bolsover’s B8 logistics offer meets the employment needs of a wider sub-region, whereas its housing need is localised, hence the disparity between employment growth and housing need."

2.06 This clear advice to the Council suggests that it would be appropriate for the Council to plan for a higher employment land target without having to revisit its housing figures.

2.07 We therefore consider to make the Local Plan sound Policy SS1 should be amended to reflect that the District should aim to accommodate at least 92 ha of new employment land during the lifetime of the Local Plan period (i.e. up to 2033) and that it will encourage additional employment development, in accordance with an up-to-date assessment of need.

3. EMPLOYMENT LAND SUPPLY: QUESTIONS 125, 126, 127, 128, 129 and 130

Q. 125 Have sufficient sites been allocated in the Local Plan to meet the target of 92ha of Class B employment land?

Q. 126 Is the overall level of employment provision of just under 92ha of B1, B2 and B8 employment land sufficient to meet the needs of the District?

Q.127 Should the sites at Sports Direct, Brook Park, Shirebrook [9.75ha]; Beaufit Lane, Brookhill Industrial Estate, Pinxton [1.23ha]; land off Midland Way, Barlborough [1.5 ha]; and Castlewood Business Park North [7.13ha], totalling 19.61ha, be included as allocations given that they have been developed? If these sites are removed the supply would be reduced to around 72ha. Would this be sufficient to meet the employment land target?
Q.128 Has the employment site selection process been based on a sound process of SA and the testing of reasonable alternatives?

Q.129 Are the sites allocated for employment uses deliverable?

Q.130 What evidence is there to show when the development of these sites would occur?

3.01 As set out above, we consider that the 92 ha employment land target figure should be expressed as a minimum for the period 2015 to 2033 and that Policy SS2 should encourage additional employment development, in accordance with an up-to-date assessment of need.

3.02 The most up-to-date assessment, as set out in the Bolsover Economic Alignment Study from August 2018 recommends that the Council should plan for 20ha of additional employment land, i.e. a total of 112 ha, which should comprise of:

- 12 ha of B1a/b office uses;
- 26 ha of B1c/B2 manufacturing uses; and
- Between 38 ha and 109 ha of B8 warehousing and distribution uses, with a mid-point figure of 74 ha recommended.

3.03 However, as Local Plan Policy WC1 only allocates 92 ha of B1, B2 and B8 employment land, this suggests that the Local Plan has not allocated sufficient sites. Furthermore, it is not certain that all of the allocated site will come forward for B1/B2/B8 development, in particular, the 14 ha allocation at Wincobank Farm at South Normanton has been subject to applications for retail development, which suggests that the site may not come forward for employment development in the short term. We therefore consider that Policy WC1 of the Local Plan should state that it will encourage additional employment development on other sites, in accordance with an up-to-date assessment of need.

3.04 If it is considered necessary for the Local Plan to allocate additional sites, the land at Markham Vale North as shown on plan in Appendix 1 would make a valuable contribution to meeting the District’s employment needs by providing 5.65 ha of land suitable for B2/B8 uses as an expansion to Markham Vale North that will build on the success of Markham Vale as a Strategic Employment Site. The site will be accessed using existing road infrastructure and will be well screened by the M1 motorway to the
south and the potential future HS2 railway line to the north, supplemented by additional landscaping.