Good morning everybody and welcome.

My name is Tom Munro and I have the honour of being the Chairman of Bolsover District Council, and the Chair of the Planning Committee and the Local Plan Steering Group.

On behalf of the Council, I would like to extend a warm welcome to Karen Baker, the Planning Inspector appointed to examine the Local Plan for Bolsover District and Louise St John Howe the Programme Officer. I would also like to extend a welcome to all of the other participants in this Examination and to thank you for taking part.

I would like to say a few words before the hearings gets started, to help set the scene.

Bolsover is a District with many exciting opportunities for growth and some challenges. It is predominantly rural and comprises of four towns and a number of large and small Villages and hamlets set within attractive countryside. It has locational advantages with good accessibility to the national road network, especially the M1 providing easy access to jobs and services in neighbouring areas. We are also part of an important gateway to the Peak District, and north Nottinghamshire, which can boast many areas of high quality landscape and other natural and historic assets.

The District has a legacy of former mining and manufacturing, which the Council have worked hard to tackle. In many cases major regeneration has taken place or re-development is either currently underway or planned through strategic site allocations.

The key aim of the Plan is to accommodate sustainable growth in a way that meets the needs of the District as a whole, whilst protecting the best of its assets. This has required a balanced approach and some difficult decisions along the way. The Local Plan is the culmination of several years of work, gathering and analysing evidence, assessing alternatives and working with neighbouring authorities, the County Council and Partners to deliver the development the district needs.

The Council welcome the opportunity presented by the Hearings to debate the soundness of the Local Plan and we will do all we can to assist the Inspector in the proceedings.

Inspector, it is the Council’s view that the Local Plan before you addresses the key planning issues of the District and will enable sustainable development in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. It is, in our view, a sound Strategy, and we hope, Inspector, that is your considered view at the close of the Examination.

Thank you.