

South Derbyshire District Council Part 2 Local Plan Review Issues and Options Representation (Regulation 18)

Prepared for Madecorn Leisure LLP

January 2026
Our Ref: 5713

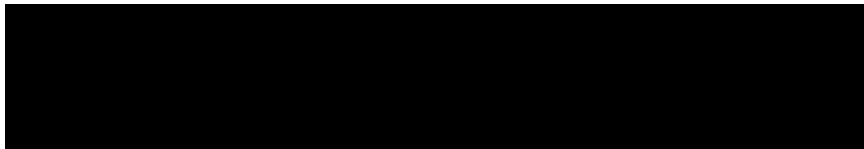


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QUALITY ASSURANCE

This report has been prepared within the quality system operated at Rapleys LLP according to British Standard ISO 9001:2015. We confirm that the undersigned is an appropriately qualified and experienced Planner.



1 INTRODUCTION

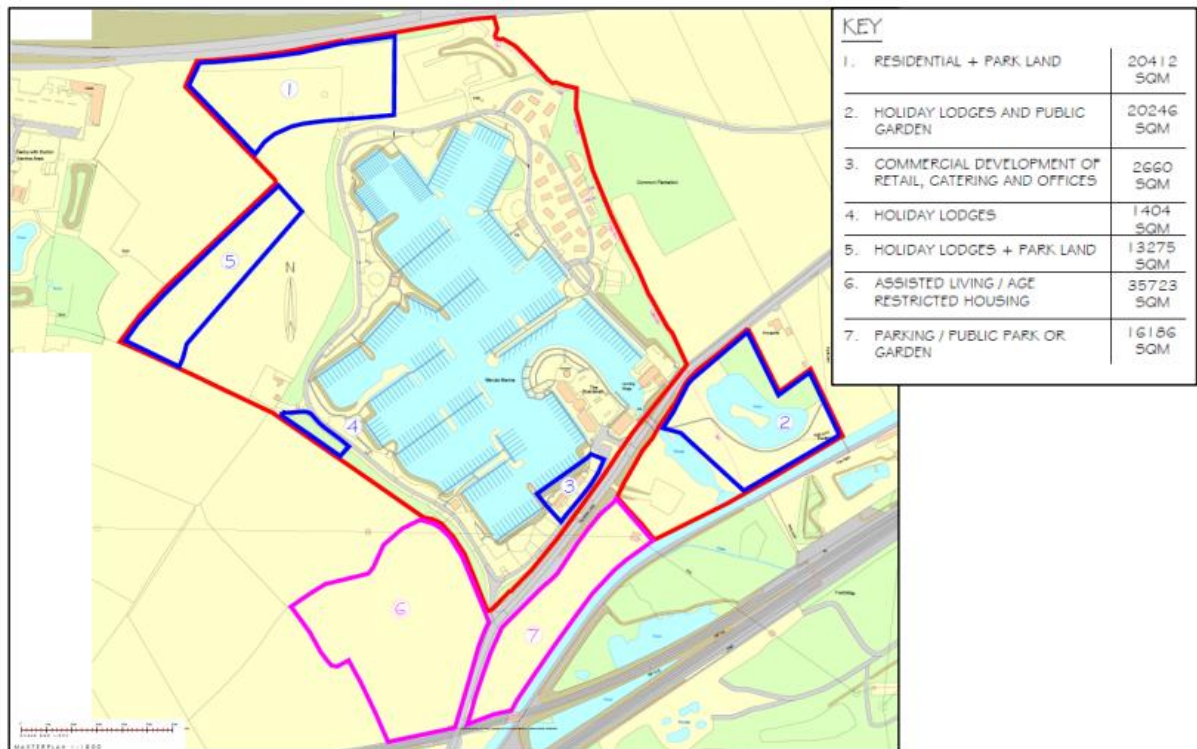
- 1.1 These representations have been prepared by Rapleys LLP on behalf of Madecorn Leisure LLP, the owner and operator of Mercia Marina. They comprise the marina operator's response to the South Derbyshire District Council (SDDC) Local Plan Part 2: Issues and Options (Regulation 18) consultation, which runs from November 2025 to 30th January 2026.
- 1.2 Mercia Marina is a regionally significant and nationally recognised tourism and leisure destination, located within the Willington area of South Derbyshire. It is the largest inland canalboat marina in Europe and represents one of the most successful examples of rural economic development in the region, combining residential and visitor moorings, holiday accommodation, independent retail, commercial space, and public amenities within a carefully managed and well-integrated environment. The Marina supports hundreds of local jobs, attracts significant year-round visitor footfall, and delivers substantial economic value for South Derbyshire and the wider area. In short, it is a vital contributor to the local economy and the local community.
- 1.3 The marina operator welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Local Plan process and fully supports the Council's aim to update the Local Plan Part 2. Of the two documents published with the consultation, the marina operator has no comments at this stage on the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. Responses to the targeted questions of the Part 2 Local Plan Review Issues and Options paper are set out in this statement.

Previous Representations

- 1.4 This statement should be read in conjunction with the following previous policy submissions made on behalf of the marina. All should be on file with the LPA, but copies can be provided on request, if required.

Call for Sites Submissions dated December 2019 by DLP Planning

- 1.5 Various sites were promoted for inclusion in the (then) emerging Local Plan, including sites within the existing marina boundary and on adjacent land. Uses included residential, retirement housing / age-restricted residential, holiday lodges, commercial (retail, catering and offices), and various public parks / communal spaces, as indicated on the drawing extract below.



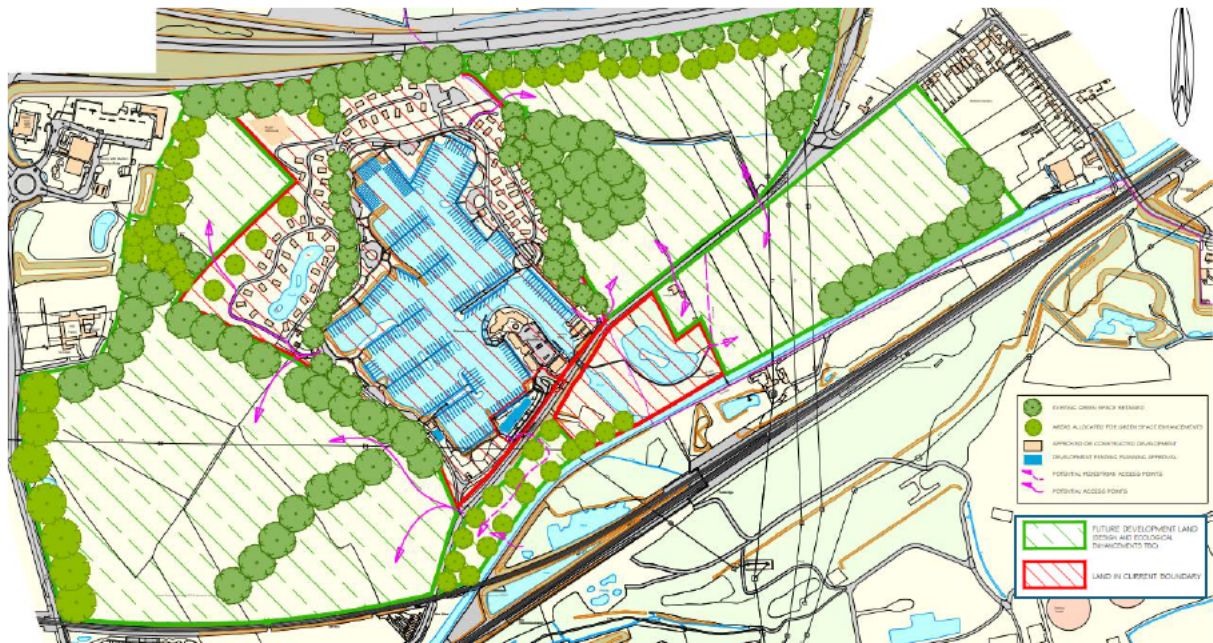
Extract from the marina's 2019 Call for Sites plan

Policy Representations dated April 2022 by CSJ Planning Consultants

1.6 These representations covered the following key issues:

- The marina's contribution to the local economy and leisure and tourism industry. This included empirical data from an Economic Impact Assessment by SQW.
- Plans and aspirations for future development and diversification at the marina, including leisure and tourism development, moorings, retail and catering, office space, dwellings, retirement accommodation and the development of adjacent land.
- The marina's track record for delivering successful development of an extremely high quality.
- The marina's sustainability credentials, including onsite facilities and links to nearby villages, towns and cities
- The current policy "void" for the unique type of development that has come forward at the marina (e.g. no marina or mooring policies) which has resulted in confusion or extended negotiations at application stage, and recommendations for how this can be addressed in future iterations of the plan through a site-specific policy for Mercia Marina.
- The benefits of a site-specific policy relating to Mercia Marina, and examples of other mixed use leisure / tourism hubs around the UK with bespoke policies.
- Suggested wording for a site specific policy at Mercia Marina.
- Constraints and opportunities appraisal for future development aspirations on adjacent parcels of land (extract below). This includes land between the marina and the A50 (north),

service station (north west), Etwall Road (west), trainline (south west), Trent and Mersey Canal (south), and Heath Lane (east).



Extract from the 2022 Constraints and Opportunities plan for future development

Response to South Derbyshire Issues and Options consultation dated October 2022 by Rapleys.

- 1.7 This submission included direct responses to the “key questions” and “extra questions” posed in the Council’s Issues and Options document.

Willington Neighbourhood Development Plan Representation (Regulation 16) dated October 2025 by Rapleys

- 1.8 These representations covered the following key issues:
- The marina’s contribution to the local economy and leisure and tourism industry.
 - The marina’s long-term vision and need for flexibility in planning policy
 - Comments on draft policy 13 – the site-specific marina policy – primarily to encourage more flexibility and support for mixed use diversification and expansion.
 - The case for retirement housing at the Marina
 - Comments on other draft NDP policies relevant to the marina.

2 THE ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY ROLE OF MERCIA MARINA

- 2.1 Mercia Marina is a nationally recognised inland marina and leisure destination, located at the heart of South Derbyshire's canal network. Since its opening in 2008, it has grown into one of the most important rural economic assets in the region, providing a high-quality mix of boating facilities, residential and holiday accommodation, retail and food outlets, workspace, and nature-led visitor experiences. Its strategic location near the A38 and A50, and its integration with the Trent and Mersey Canal, further enhances its accessibility and appeal.
- 2.2 An independently commissioned 2022 Economic Impact Assessment found that the Marina receives approximately 800,000 visitors annually, placing it among Derbyshire's most visited destinations, rivalling or exceeding visitor numbers for more traditional heritage attractions such as Chatsworth House or Calke Abbey. It supports an estimated:
- 436 local jobs, including 305 on-site roles;
 - £18.8 million in Gross Value Added (GVA) annually to the local economy;
 - A diverse mix of over 20 businesses, including shops, cafés, restaurants, leisure facilities, offices, and tourism services.
- 2.3 The Marina's positive impact extends beyond direct employment. Through its physical setting, integration with canal networks and naturalistic landscaping, it supports health and wellbeing, inclusive access to green space, and promotes local enterprise through a model that favours small, independent operators. Its nature trails, boating activities, bike hire scheme, and commitment to conservation and community events illustrate its broader social role.
- 2.4 Existing development at the marina has been designed and completed to a very high standard, with public realm improvements and environmental considerations key to its success. Of note, both the Boardwalk and Piazza developments (mixed use commercial) have won design awards. More recently, this approach has been carried forward to the Promenade development, which was approved in 2022. The Promenade building is another exceptional design, similar in architectural style to the aforementioned developments, and again demonstrates the marina operator's commitment to design excellence. Any future development at the site will follow a similar approach, where design and build quality is of paramount importance.
- 2.5 Mercia Marina is also the headquarters for Bionical Solutions, a global healthcare company employing 125 staff on site, demonstrating that it is not only a tourism destination, but also a viable base for high-value employment in a rural context.

3 THE NEED FOR LONG-TERM FLEXIBILITY

3.1 While the Marina has delivered significant economic, environmental and community benefits to date, its long-term sustainability relies on being able to respond proactively to changing economic trends, leisure preferences and demographic needs. Like all rural enterprises, it cannot rely on static demand or a single economic model.

3.2 The recent Economic Impact Assessment concluded that without reinvestment and diversification, the Marina's economic contribution could decline over time. It is for this reason that national policy – particularly the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – strongly supports the continued evolution of rural enterprises. Paragraph 88 of the NPPF requires that:

Planning policies and decisions should enable:

(a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas...

(b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;

(c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside..."

(d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

3.3 Further, paragraph 89 recognises that:

Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport.

3.4 The Marina's location and model, being separate from Willington Village, is a direct example of the type of rural business cluster envisaged by these policies. It is essential that the Neighbourhood Plan reflects this by enabling flexibility in how the Marina evolves, particularly where proposals are demonstrably sustainable and of clear community and economic benefit.

4 STRATEGIC GROWTH AND LONG-TERM VISION

- 4.1 The Marina operator is seeking a measured degree of policy flexibility that allows for proposals to be assessed on their merits, subject to design, environmental and infrastructure considerations – not refused on principle due to over-restrictive land use or boundary-based policies.
- 4.2 To ensure it continues to thrive and support the local economy, Mercia Marina must be able to respond proactively to changing patterns of visitor demand, leisure behaviour, and economic conditions. Like many rural destinations, its resilience will depend on its ability to refresh its offer, diversify its attractions, and align its facilities with the evolving needs of both residents and visitors.
- 4.3 The UK's tourism and leisure economy has entered into a period of profound change. Post-COVID behavioural shifts, ageing demographics, cost-of-living pressures, and changing holiday preferences all influence the ways people spend their time and money. These trends cannot be predicted with certainty, and planning policy should not seek to fossilise current conditions. Instead, Mercia Marina seeks a planning framework that enables it to adapt and innovate, ensuring that it can remain a high-quality, economically beneficial destination for years to come.
- 4.4 Mercia Marina is a regionally significant tourism and leisure focused mixed use development. Its future ambitions therefore include both enhancements to its existing offer and the development of complementary uses that support the site's long-term sustainability and the broader needs of the community, including:
- Further holiday lodge provision, recognising market demand.
 - The introduction of smaller, craft-led retail and workshop units to provide greater variety, attract new audiences and to provide specialised classes for the existing community, new residents and visitors according to their interests.
 - Investment in public realm, visitor facilities and recreational uses, such as gardens, play areas, nature trails, and activity-based attractions (e.g. adventure golf or wellbeing spaces).
 - Expansion of the food and beverage offer, to help support the evening economy and increase dwell time.
 - The management and adjustment of existing mooring numbers / proportions to ensure a mix of leisure, residential, and commercial moorings that responds to market conditions, as well as the construction of additional moorings, where appropriate.
 - The construction of age-restricted / retirement homes on land adjacent to the marina. These would meet a demonstrable local need as well as providing an opportunity for existing narrowboat residents to remain within the community when seeking a more accessible form of land-based living. These would be high-quality units suitable to the rural location, probably pre-fabricated in the manner of residential park homes, albeit of a much higher standard than historic park home designs.
- 4.5 The area for potential expansion of the marina remains as per the constraints and opportunities plan submitted with representations in April 2022 and includes land between the marina and the A50 (north), service station (north west), Etwall Road (west), trainline (south west), Trent and Mersey Canal (south), and Heath Lane (east). The land is enclosed by either neighbouring development or transport infrastructure, creating a logical outer boundary for future expansion.

While currently within the open countryside, the area is not a valuable landscape, nor particularly scenic or rural in appearance, given the aforementioned transport infrastructure and the backdrop of the nearby power station. As such, it is more suited to development than other more sensitive greenfield sites.

- 4.6 The above uses that involve residential development are addressed in more detail in Chapter 6 of this statement (in response to question 2 of the consultation).

5 KEY PLANNING POLICY OBJECTIVES

5.1 As set out in the policy representations dated April 2022, the current planning policy environment is not considered to suitably recognise or support the marina and its associated uses. In particular:

- The marina complex is not covered by any site-specific policy or designation, meaning it is – at face value, at least – a rural site outside any settlement boundaries, despite the broad variety of shops, food and drink uses, homes, holiday lets, employment opportunities etc.
- There is no recognition of, or protection for, the status of the site as a leisure and tourism destination and the contribution it makes to the local economy and community, either on the policies map or in Development Plan documents.
- There are no current policies that directly address marinas or moorings. This has resulted in certain applications, most notably for residential moorings, falling ‘between’ policies and causing confusion and extended negotiations.
- Planning Officers are often required to assess applications for development at the marina against generic countryside policies, despite the wide range of existing facilities, residents and jobs supported onsite.

5.2 As a result, the marina’s key objectives are for the Local Plan to:

- Recognise the marina as an existing mixed-use leisure destination.
- Support sensitive mixed-use infill development at the site.
- Support the sensitive expansion of the complex onto neighbouring land.

5.3 To achieve these goals, it is proposed that the marina is:

- Identified as a settlement and given a settlement boundary.
- Identified as a retail centre.
- Allocated as a site for future mixed-use development, including adjacent fields.
- Addressed by a site-specific policy that seeks to protect and enhance the marina as a mixed-use destination. This could be complemented by a designation on the Council’s Proposals Map.

5.4 Draft wording for a site-specific policy is provided below for consideration:

Development, including infilling and redevelopment of land within the existing site, will be permitted where it would support the marina complex as a leisure and tourism focused mixed use destination and enhance its contribution to the local economy. This is likely to include leisure uses, marina development, customer facilities, retail uses, food & drink uses, holiday accommodation, car parking, landscaping and environmental improvements.

Residential and office development will be permitted where it is required to enable further leisure / tourism development, or is demonstrated to be compatible with, and beneficial to, the leisure and tourism function of the destination and the local economy, or is necessary for economic reasons.

Development, including retirement housing and holiday homes, which results in an expansion onto nearby land will be permitted where it is suitable in terms of design, scale, sustainability and environmental impact, and compatible with the character and uses on the existing site.

The use of existing moorings and applications for new moorings for leisure, residential and commercial use on the existing or adjacent land will be supported in principle provided that a mix of uses appropriate to market demand is provided.

Changes of use of existing moorings will be supported in principle provided that the proposed mix of uses is appropriate to market demand.

- 5.5 The draft policy is considered to suitably address the owners' aspirations, while respecting the site constraints and thrust of local and national planning policy.
- 5.6 As explored in Chapter 6 of the April 2022 policy representations, the draft policy is also considered representative of how other LPAs support and manage similar tourism destinations through the planning system.
- 5.7 Given its track record for excellence, the marina is considered to offer a refreshing and bespoke opportunity for delivering high-quality residential development, together with leisure & tourism gains, economic and local community benefits and environmental improvements. Furthermore, development at the marina would add character to an area of limited rural value which is overshadowed by transport infrastructure and industry.
- 5.8 Madecorn Leisure LLP, the marina owner / operator, would welcome further discussions on the above as the Local Plan Review progresses.

6 RESPONSE TO ISSUES AND OPTIONS QUESTIONS

6.1 Questions relevant to Mercia Marina are addressed in turn below.

Question 1: Should the Council produce a Local Plan Part 2 Review under the existing planning system, or should a single full Local Plan Review be undertaken under the new system? (please tick one)

- *Produce a Local Plan Part 2 Review under the existing system*
- *Produce a single Full Local Plan under the new system*
- *Other.*

6.2 Given that the Local Plan Review has already been split into two parts, with Part 1 having been adopted, it is considered that the Council should produce a Local Plan Part 2 Review under the existing system to avoid further delays. However, when the time comes for the “next” review, a single Local Plan would be preferable.

Question 2: Where should the housing needs be met? Please provide site details including projected delivery timescales and the specific need being met.

6.3 For the reasons discussed above and in previous representations, Mercia Marina is well suited to provide additional residential accommodation in the form of retirement homes, residential moorings, as well as holiday homes. In each case, the proposed developments would not constitute stand-alone parcels of development, but rather natural and sustainable extensions of the Marina's existing function and community.

Proposal	Retirement homes on land adjacent to the marina. These would likely be provided as high-quality pre-fabricated units (park homes), qualifying as caravans under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960.
Specific Need	<p>The Derby and South Derbyshire Local Housing Needs Assessment (December 2023) and The Willington Housing Needs Assessment (AECOM, 2022) identify evidence of a clear and pressing need for the delivery of older persons' accommodation in Willington and the wider South Derbyshire area. The latter report also highlights the inefficient use of existing housing stock by older people, suggesting unmet demand for downsizing or age-appropriate alternatives.</p> <p>The marina operator is also aware of demand from existing narrowboat residents, most notably those in their later years or with restricted mobility, for bespoke retirement accommodation onsite, which would allow them to stay within the close-knit marina community when life aboard a boat becomes unsustainable.</p> <p>A more general, yet still entirely relevant, point is that people's lifestyles are changing and the amount of time they commit to leisure pursuits is growing. There is now a greater focus on work / life balance and fulfilment from those of working age, as well as a shift towards greater reliance on robotics and artificial intelligence in the workplace. Improvements in medicine and a greater awareness of (and adherence to) healthy living mean people are living longer and are more active in their later years. As such, leisure time is growing - particularly for those of retirement age - and there is a resulting need for more leisure activities and facilities. Mercia Marina is uniquely placed to satisfy the demand for retirement housing and provide leisure facilities in a sustainable</p>

	<p>manner i.e. on the same site, both through its existing facilities and intended future facilities on neighbouring land.</p> <p>Further commentary on the need for specialist housing for older people is set out in the marina operator's response to the Willington Neighbourhood Development Plan consultation dated October 2025.</p>
Site Suitability	<p>The marina offers a broad range and mix of onsite facilities, including various shops, food and drink uses, open space, walking routes, environmental improvements, community and leisure activities, cycle hire, offices, holiday lodges, apartments, marine uses, moorings (leisure, residential and commercial), and nearby public transport links. In short, it is able to cater for many of the everyday needs of residents onsite, as well as offering good links to nearby settlements, and is therefore a sustainable location for future residential development.</p> <p>The marina also has a track record of delivering high quality development, with a focus on creating an attractive public realm, incorporating public open space, play areas, landscaping and environmental benefits. As such, were the complex to expand beyond its current demise, the LPA can be assured that any development on adjacent land would be designed and completed to the same high standard as the award-winning Boardwalk and Piazza developments.</p>
Timescales	Within the next 5 years.

Proposal	Residential and leisure moorings in the existing basin (primarily via change of use as the market dictates) and on adjacent sections of the canal and marina link (new moorings).
Specific Need	Residential moorings are in high demand at the marina and elsewhere, principally because they are a specialist form of housing that requires a waterway or marina location, which are not abundant. Residential moorings also offer a low-cost form of housing, often being up to three times cheaper than their bricks and mortar counterparts, so they can also help address the need for affordable housing.
Site Suitability	Mercia Marina is the largest inland canalboat marina in Europe and offers all necessary waste disposal facilities, utility connections, chandlery, shops and eateries to serve the boating community (along with the other facilities discussed above). It is one of the few places in the district that can offer the required environment and facilities for this specialist type of residential accommodation, so is ideally suited to provide additional residential moorings.
Timescales	The marina will retain a mix of leisure, residential and commercial moorings in the existing basin, but seeks the flexibility to adjust the quantities to address shifts in the demand for each. Changes of use to residential or vice versa will therefore come forward according to market demand. New moorings in the canal and marina link could be delivered within the next 5 years.

Proposal	Holiday homes on land adjacent to the marina.
Specific Need	Holiday accommodation is essential if South Derbyshire is to capitalise on recent and anticipated future growth in the leisure and tourism sector as

	<p>leisure time increases, and to take advantage of the economic benefits arising from higher visitor numbers to the district's attractions and local businesses.</p> <p>The provision of bespoke holiday lets – like the existing high-quality lodges at Mercia Marina – satisfies the demand from tourists without the loss of family homes to holiday use or Airbnb operations, which can be prevalent in settlements near to major attractions.</p> <p>At the marina site, the existing lodges have been taken-up swiftly and the operator is aware of demand for further such units at the site.</p>
Site Suitability	The site – which is already very popular with tourists – offers an attractive rural environment with a variety of shops, eateries, leisure activities, walking routes, boating opportunities, marina and chandlery facilities, and cycle hire, as well as being well placed for linked trips to nearby settlements and attractions. There is also scope for additional leisure attractions and facilities as part of future development on neighbouring land. As such, it is ideally suited for holiday accommodation.
Timescales	Within the next 5 years

- 6.4 In each case, the proposed developments would not constitute stand-alone parcels of development, but rather natural and sustainable extensions of the Marina's existing function and community.

Question 3: Are there other mechanisms that the plan should consider to securing housing delivery in addition to allocating specific sites (e.g. identifying indicative broad locations/areas for future growth adjacent to existing settlements, extending settlement boundaries, supporting certain Changes of Use)? Yes/No Please provide a reason for your answer

- 6.5 Yes. Where a site allocation may not be *currently* feasible, but the land represents a suitable and sustainable location for future development, it would make sense to identify the land as such, or to include it within an extended settlement boundary. Such an approach could be feasible at Mercia Marina and further discussions on this matter with the LPA would be welcomed.

Question 4: Are there any other issues that the Council should consider when ensuring the timely delivery of the right homes in the right places (e.g. policy criteria for looked after children, re-allocating unimplemented employment allocations)? Yes/No Please provide a reason for your answer.

- 6.6 It is important that the Local Plan Review gives landowners, businesses and planning officers the flexibility to react quickly to changing market conditions, so that opportunities for delivering housing can be maximised, for example through the repurposing of undeveloped site allocations and vacant buildings.
- 6.7 At the marina, for example, the demand for different mooring types is ever changing, and the operator would benefit greatly from the flexibility to adjust the quantities of leisure, commercial and residential moorings as the market dictates (within reason) to ensure that periods of vacancy and underuse are avoided.

6.8 It is also important to consider whether housing developments offer the “right” types of accommodation to help optimise how the wider housing stock is utilised. For example, the construction of new retirement homes at the marina (and elsewhere) – as well as helping address the demand for such – will also encourage “downsizing,” thereby freeing up larger dwellings for use by families.

6.9 The comments below under Question 5 are also relevant here, since recognising (and planning to meet) demand for specialist types of housing, including retirement homes, residential moorings and holiday homes, is important if the “right” homes are to be delivered.

Question 5: What specific accommodation needs should the Local Plan address through allocations (e.g. extra care accommodation for older people, care home provision for looked after children etc.)? Please provide details

6.10 As well as general purpose housing, the Local Plan Review should allocate land, or at least set out explicit support, where appropriate, for retirement housing and residential moorings. These forms of “specialist” housing are often overlooked despite having significant pockets of demand from prospective buyers actively seeking the specific type of living arrangement / lifestyle offered by them. This is discussed further in the tables above in the response to Question 2.

6.11 Paragraph 63 of the NPPF is relevant in this regard, which states: *“within this context of establishing need, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies.”*

6.12 Holiday homes should also be supported in the emerging Local Plan Part 2. Holiday accommodation is essential if South Derbyshire is to capitalise on recent growth in the leisure and tourism sector, and to take advantage of the economic benefits arising from higher visitor numbers to the district’s attractions and local businesses. As mentioned above, improvements in medicine and technology, longer lifespans, and a switch toward healthy lifestyles, means leisure time is growing. As such, demand for leisure facilities and holiday homes is only expected to increase in the future.

6.13 As set out above and in previous representations, a site-specific policy for Mercia Marina is recommended to support these elements at the site, which will help address demand in a suitable and sustainable location.

Question 10: Do you agree with the principles for assessing the settlement boundaries, as set out in Appendix 1? Yes/No Please provide a reason for your answer.

6.14 The majority of principles are logical and supported, however, it will be important for these to be applied in a pragmatic manner to avoid stifling development opportunities on potentially suitable land parcels. For example, when applying principle 4(f), which seeks to exclude areas of open space at the edge of settlements from settlement boundaries, the contribution, value and use of the open space should be taken into consideration, particularly if it falls between groups of buildings or transport infrastructure and / or if it is well suited for future sustainable development (see Question 3).

6.15 It is also worth noting that the principles focus primarily on how the boundaries will be drawn, and do not include guidance on which settlements will qualify for a boundary or how this decision will be made. As discussed elsewhere, Mercia Marina – which has a greater number of onsite facilities than various current settlements – should be given a settlement boundary to recognise

the situation “on the ground,” including the sustainability credentials of the site, which would help provide greater certainty for future planning applications at the site.

Question 11: What issues regarding the settlement boundaries should the Council consider? Please provide a comment.

- 6.16 As discussed above, Mercia Marina offers a wide range of uses and facilities onsite. It is, in effect, a small settlement in its own right, though is currently located outside any settlement boundaries. The Council is encouraged to address this anomaly in the emerging Local Plan Part 2 Review by identifying the marina as a settlement and producing a site-specific policy concerning future development at the site – one that recognises the sustainability credentials of the marina and seeks to support sensitive diversification and expansion. Draft wording for such a policy is set out in Chapter 5 of this statement.

Question 12: Do you agree with the retail hierarchy? Yes/No Please provide a reason for your answer.

- 6.17 No. The retail hierarchy fails to include Mercia Marina, despite it already offering a wide range of shops and food and drink uses, including:

- B Well/Saba
- Black By Design
- Bluebird Fine Art
- Boat Street Floating Café
- Compamigos
- Elegant Touch Beauty
- Fletcher and Company
- Hettie and Sid
- Lotus Indian Kitchen
- Merchant’s Jewellers
- Midland Chandlers
- New & Used Boat Company
- Still Waters Convenience and Gift Shop
- Streethay Wharf Engineering
- The Beetroot Tree Deli and Coffee House
- White Finn
- Willow Tree Tea Rooms

- 6.18 This offer is comparable with a small town’s high street, and greater than many of the settlements listed as “Other Centres in Key and Local Service Villages” in the proposed hierarchy.

- 6.19 As such, the marina should be added to the retail hierarchy, both to help protect the retail element of the tourist destination and support future expansion of retail uses.

*Question 22: Are there any amendments required to the existing policies to reflect implemented changes to national planning policy, policy guidance or Regulations? Yes/No
Please provide a reason for your answer.*

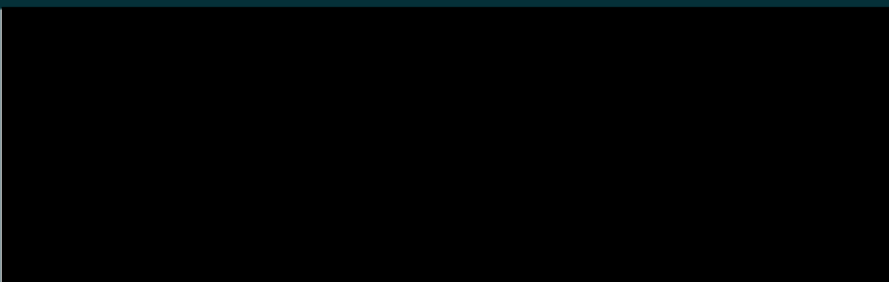
- 6.20 There are certain policies listed in Appendix 2 of the consultation document, such as BNE5, which concern development in rural areas and link back to the settlement boundaries set out in policy SDT1. As discussed in these representations, it is considered that the current list of settlements should be updated to recognise Mercia Marina, and this would need to be taken into consideration when applying the relevant countryside policies.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Mercia Marina is not only a defining feature of Willington Parish but also one of the most significant rural economic assets in South Derbyshire. It supports over 400 jobs, generates nearly £19 million in Gross Value Added (GVA) each year, and attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. Beyond this, it provides high-quality public space, leisure, employment, independent retail, and environmental value, all within a privately maintained and locally integrated setting. Its success is closely tied to the vitality of Willington village and the wider local economy.
- 7.2 In uncertain economic times, and amidst rapid changes in tourism, leisure and housing demand, it is essential that planning policy provides a robust but flexible framework for the Marina to continue evolving. A planning regime that is too restrictive or narrowly drawn would risk constraining investment, innovation and community value and, in doing so, undermine the delivery of social and economic benefits that extend far beyond the site itself.
- 7.3 The Local Plan has a vital role to play in ensuring that Mercia Marina is supported not just as it is today, but as it may need to become in the years ahead. This includes allowing for appropriate forms of expansion and diversification whether through improved visitor facilities, new small-scale commercial opportunities, or the delivery of specialist accommodation that meets genuine local need.
- 7.4 As things stand, the current planning policy environment is not considered to suitably recognise or support the marina and its associated uses. As a result, the marina's key objectives are for the Local Plan to:
- Recognise the marina as an existing mixed-use leisure destination.
 - Support sensitive mixed-use infill development at the site.
 - Support the sensitive expansion of the complex onto neighbouring land.
- 7.5 To achieve these goals, it is proposed that the marina is:
- Identified as a settlement and given a settlement boundary.
 - Identified as a retail centre.
 - Allocated as a site for future mixed-use development, including expansion on adjacent land.
 - Addressed by a site-specific policy that seeks to protect and enhance the marina as a mixed-use destination, as well as supporting sensitive expansion. This could be complemented by a designation on the Council's Proposals Map.
- 7.6 Draft wording for a site-specific policy is provided in Chapter 5 for consideration, and the extent of future expansion plans is shown on the Constraints and Opportunities Plan submitted in April 2022 and shown on p4 of this statement.
- 7.7 Furthermore, it is recommended that the Local Plan Part 2 places greater emphasis on meeting the demand for specialist types of residential development, including retirement homes, residential moorings, and holiday homes.
- 7.8 Given its track record for excellence, the marina is considered to offer a refreshing and bespoke opportunity for delivering high-quality residential development, together with leisure & tourism

gains, economic and local community benefits and environmental improvements. Furthermore, development at the marina would add character to an area of limited visual amenity which is currently overshadowed by transport infrastructure and industry.

- 7.9 We respectfully ask that these representations are given due consideration, and the marina operator would welcome the opportunity to discuss the content of this statement further as the Plan moves forward.



RAPLEYS