

GS/404/IK

Local Plan Examination – Hearings Statements – HIE – Fort William Business and Industry Land

HEARING No 2 – 1400 to 1700 – Overall sufficiency of land allocations

Representation

For this topic HIE will be represented by Ian Kelly, Head of Planning, Graham and Sibbald and by Scott Dingwall, Head of Transformational Projects, HIE Fort William Area Officer. Ian Kelly will lead on this topic.

HIE Overall Objectives on This Topic

The overall HIE objective is to ensure that there is a sufficiency of available business and industrial land, allocated/reserved for that purpose, that is serviced or capable of being serviced at reasonable costs, to provide a choice of sites likely to meet the likely range of user requirements during the Plan period. It would appear that, broadly, the Council supports this overall objective.

Background

There are two key drivers setting the HIE view. Firstly, there is the view that the final Draft Local Plan position with land for industry and business is illusory. Basically, virtually none of the allocated land is available. Secondly, between the draft and the finalised draft Local Plans the Council moved from having allocated and reserved business and industry sites to having mixed use areas within which it was hoped that some such uses would be provided. The reasoning for this change has never been fully explained and, in HIE's view, this leads to unacceptable uncertainties.

Observations on the Council Statement

In response to the Council Statement HIE would offer the following comments, using the Council document paragraph numbers:

- 1.1 – largely agreed
- 1.2 – welcome the recognition of the need for choice
- 1.3 – in terms of table 1, the remnant capacity is not a real figure. The following comments are offered:
 - 4.5.5(b) – Blar Mor, Phase 11 – the issue of the link road may make this undevelopable
 - 4.5.5(c) – Annat, Corpach, Phase 1 – remaining site was recently under offer but is now being remarketed. The remainder of the site has been developed or sold to third parties for development

- 4.5.5(f) – Annat – site sold, buffer for caravan park and future sawmill expansion
- 4.5.5(g) – Carbon Factory (West) – this is an operational area and an access route for RTA
- 4.5.5(h) – Former Wood Yard, Corpach – storage use by Clydeport
- 4.5.5(i) – Old Admiralty Site – this has been redeveloped by Ferguson Transport
- 4.5.5(o) – British Alcan – this is a strategic company land holding
- 4.5.6 – Ben Nevis Industrial estate Phase II (Business Park) – known as Glen Nevis Business Park, one site held for office expansion, one site sold for development and one site being marketed having recently come back onto the market
- 4.5.7 – Blar Mor Industrial Estate Phase 1 – we understand that the Council may have granted a site lease to another party
- 4.5.12 – Town Centre/Waterfront – preferred developers have been identified for this site
- 4.5.13(e) – An Aird (North West) – no comment at this stage
- 4.5.13(g) – Saw Mill – still operational
- 4.5.13(h) – Carr’s Corner – being held for an identified use
- 4.5.22 – Blar Mor Campus – this site is being promoted for mixed use, the employment element is not guaranteed

This gives an actual remaining capacity for non owner occupiers of more or less nil.

- The Structure Plan policy of safeguarding sites should be followed through into the Local Development Plan as requested by HIE.
- In terms of the additional sites in Table 2
 - B3 – Leanachan Forest – being promoted for tourism and outdoor uses
 - B6 – Glen Nevis Business Park – this is the land that HIE wishes to develop as a second phase
 - MU2 – Corpach Locks – this involves expensive land reclamation
 - MU3 – Banavie Car Park – held by British Waterways and more suited for tourism uses

- MU4 – Mount Alexander – this is adjacent to a scrap yard which is not compatible with office uses
- MU8 – Lundavra – there are a range of mixed use opportunities yet to be determined
- MU9 – Torlundy New Community – this is being promoted for mixed uses
- MU17 – Upper Achintore – HIE are securing 0.5ha (NOT 5ha)

This means that the realistic additional capacity is 7.5ha at Glen Nevis Business Park and 0.5ha at Upper Achintore

- 3.1 – in terms of the Council comments about the 15% it is the case that not all business and industrial uses would be compatible with adjoining residential uses. A specific allocation is preferable for everyone to then use in forward planning
- 4.1 – as set out above the reality is different
- 5.2 – this summary is fully agreed as is a key reason why HIE is seeking the specific allocations
- 5.4 – HIE does not agree with the Council assessment. The promotion of mixed use schemes is likely to raise issues of inflated land values, heightened owner/developer expectations, a need to wait on the overall development coming forward, and the potential incompatibility between some uses
- 5.5 – the role of HIE is to facilitate and promote business and industrial development and it cannot become involved in housing provision. HIE has invested and continues to invest on that basis, and various examples can be discussed at the Hearing. In that regard it is the policy of HIE to acquire land at market value and also to work in partnership with the Council and private sector developers and occupiers. It is considered that the specific reservation of land for business and industry will assist effective masterplanning by avoiding the potential for future co-location of non compatible uses
- 5.6 – this is considered to be too vague to be relied upon. Specific allocations are the preferred approach
- 5.7 – in relation to Table 3 it is HIE's view that all of the currently unserved sites have a variety of constraints and that is one of the key reasons for HIE seeking to have allocated sites as the focus for future investment activity

Response to the Reporter's Questions

The Reporter's questions are considered below using the numbering in the letter of 16th November 2009:

- 1 – this is as discussed above from the HIE perspective
- 2 – the Approved Structure Plan seeks the protection of employment sites and this is the approach preferred by HIE
- 3 – the HIE view has been set out above, The matter is probably best further developed in discussion at the Hearing. However, the basic HIE objective is for the three key sites to have a protected Local Development Plan allocation
- 4 – the HIE position is that there is an under supply of land, reserved for these uses, that can be considered as effective and available for the range of requirements and choice for non owner occupiers
- 5 – an increase in the land which can be guaranteed would be justified through the use of a protective designation
- 6 – HIE is aware of some planning applications (for example the BSW Sawmill at Kilmallie, Ferguson Transport at Corpach, Sundollit Extension etc but would look to the Council to provide a comprehensive list. However, a restricted number of planning applications might well just be reflective of the lack of available sites

Conclusions

It is considered that there is not an overwhelming disagreement between HIE and the Council on this matter. The actual broad locations for business and industry uses are supported and agreed. The key matter that requires to be resolved is the mechanism whereby there can be confidence that the appropriate land allocations will be available, will be protected and will actually be delivered through to implementation.

It is HIE's considered view that the best way to achieve this is to have land specifically identified for business and industry uses and to have it protected for those specific uses.

Ian Kelly MRTPI,

Head of Planning, Graham and Sibbald

21st December 2009