



WEST HIGHLANDS AND ISLAND LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

HEARING 2 : The Alleged Under-Provision of Land Allocated for the Development of Business and Industry in Fort William

Statement by David Tough FRICS, MRTPI, Ryden LLP on behalf of Malcolm Cameron.

My name is David Tough. I am a Partner in Ryden LLP and a Chartered Town Planner and Chartered Surveyor. I represent Malcolm Cameron who has land interests at Lundavra, Fort William (MU8) a proposed allocation for mixed use development including employment land.

Subject 1 : Established Business and Industrial Land Supply

SPP2 : Economic Development sets out a requirement to offer a range of sites to meet market demand, recognising that demand may be uncertain.

The emphasis is on 'employment' land rather than specifically business and industry which is only one set of components of employment. For example there is recognition in SPP2 that employment use can include other sectors such as tourism and retailing.

Highland Council are correct in stating national planning policy is less prescriptive about maintaining a supply of employment land than for housing land and there is no definition of established supply.

Subject 2 : Structure Plan Requirements relating to Business and Industry

The Council statement confirms the Structure Plan safeguards strategic sites and sets out a requirement for a minimum of 5 hectares of land for general business and industry in Lochaber. However, it is recognised the Structure Plan is now out of date.

Subject 3 : Additional Business and Industrial Land supply in the new Local Plan

The plan sets out a requirement for circa 3 hectares of employment land at the Lundavra site.

The promoters of the Lundavra site are prepared to make this land available within an overall masterplan for the site.

Subject 4 : Does the Provision in the Local Plan equate to an undersupply of land for Business and Industrial Development

A supply of 34 hectares of employment land in Lochaber does constitute an oversupply based on the Highland Structure Plan requirement.

In such a thin market as Fort William there is no conclusive way of assessing whether supply is adequate or not due to the low level of transactions. In effect, one cannot be conclusive whether there is an adequate or inadequate supply of employment land opportunities. Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and the Council probably have the best sources of data on both enquiries and transactions.

Subject 5 : Would an increase in provision be justified?

It is the case that much of the allocated land is not effective as the Council states in its submission. The Council's reasoning for this is generally accepted.

It is accepted the key issue is about delivery rather than the level of supply of land. Much depends upon market conditions and any financial stimulus available from the Council or HIE to make new development viable.

The promoters of the Lundavra site are prepared to make land available for employment use. It is suggested that the way forward would be for land to be identified within mixed use allocations such as Lundavra (MU8) but that it be made available and reserved for the full range of potential employment uses, not for business and industry only. If the land is not developed within 10 years the landowner should be able to promote an alternative use on the site. They agree with the Council that the specific delineation of land within mixed use sites may be unhelpful in that process. There is no doubt that a developer would resist servicing land in advance of employment development beyond making provision for the land as part of a wider mixed use allocation.