

GS/404/IK

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

HEARING No 3 – Wednesday 1000 to 1300 – Expansion Site MU1 (Corpach)

Representation

For this topic HIE will be represented by Ian Kelly, Head of Planning, Graham and Sibbald and by David Oxley, HIE Fort William Area Office. 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.

In relation to the MU1 site the HIE objection seeks the re-allocation of the operational part of this site, which extends to approximately 1.8 ha, for use classes 4, 5 and 6. HIE does not consider that the proposed mixed use allocation, even with the Council's proposed modification wording, will secure the availability of this key land.

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 – The Council notes that the Adopted Local Plan allocates the existing saw mill for continued business/industry uses. This is exactly what HIE wishes to promote
- 3.1 and 3.2 – the contamination issue is noted. This can be mitigated in the development of the site and the standard of mitigation/treatment would be less onerous for the proposed uses than for residential

- 4.1 – it is noted that the Council’s proposed approach would “allocate” a minimum of 7.9ha of employment land. It is considered that this allocation should initially focus on the saw mill site as a brownfield development opportunity
- 5.3 – HIE disagree with this view as far as the employment uses are concerned. It is considered that there is sound planning sense in allocating the previous employment site, now contaminated, for employment uses. That can then be factored into the overall planning of the remainder of the site.

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, there are no recent planning permissions as far as HIE is aware
- 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. It is considered that the on site contamination can be addressed in the development of the site
- 4 – HIE would not dispute that the site has potential for a range of uses. The objective is to best secure the employment use
- 5 – HIE has no particular view on this providing those different uses did not prejudice the allocation and development of the employments site
- 6 – HIE is aware of some of the constraints. They are not seen as insurmountable for the employment uses
- 7 – this is precisely what HIE is seeking in relation to the employment land
- 8 – HIE is not aware of any such adverse effects

Conclusions

Again, it is considered that there is not an overwhelming disagreement between HIE and the Council on this matter. The proposed allocation of this site for development and the principle of a range of land uses are not disputed by HIE. What is in dispute is the means of securing the employment land allocation.

For the reasons set out to date, in relation to the MU1 site, HIE seeks the re-allocation of the operational part of this site, which extends to approximately 1.8 ha, for use classes 4, 5 and 6. HIE does not consider that the proposed mixed use allocation, even with the Council’s proposed modification wording, will secure the availability of this key land.

This approach is in accord with HIE's considered view that the best way to achieve the delivery of employment land is to have that 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